



By [Karen Clark Cole](#)

Many companies have demonstrated a whole new ability to get work done outside of an office environment, and many people have developed Zoom skills they never thought imaginable. Even though new technology has made remote collaboration possible, many people are still struggling with putting sticky notes on a Mural white board while using Zoom.

I, for one, am starting to wonder if using our emerging skills and tools is the new standard for how we conduct business in a virtual working world, and if I ever get to attend another office party.

Is it possible that office spaces are a thing of the past? Or will we all get back to the office, keep our desks six feet apart, and wear masks in meetings? Are we moving toward doing “desk work” at home and coming to the office only when we need to collaborate?

Do we even need desks if we come into the office solely to collaborate? Will hoteling or sharing desk space become more common? Should we be considering turning office spaces into pure collaboration zones? And what are the things that make in-person collaboration so essential anyway?



Even if a mini version of this happens, what about all the years and dollars spent creating our company’s brand identity, our efforts to immerse each client in our ethos as they walk off the elevator into our painstaking and lovingly designed space, sipping a cool glass of our Kool-Aid?

Is all of that gone the minute the Zoom meeting starts, and we enter Sally’s bedroom, complete with dogs barking and kids singing? And during her big presentation, we can’t help but wonder if she had a shower before work or if she always wears a bandana during meetings. We wonder what her dog’s name is and how hard it must be to work without childcare.

And if we can’t invite our new clients to kickoff a project in our curated office space, how do we bring them into our world and wrap them in our corporate velvet? Will it take longer for clients to trust us? Will the sales cycle be longer, or maybe the opposite will be true? If clients meet my cat and see my daughter playing flute in the background maybe they’ll trust me more without any branding magic to cut through.

In this new world, the corporate brand identity - the fabric holding us all together - will surely need to be extended. But how? Will companies who are saving on rent and travel start sending out green screens and company logo images to display behind our Hollywood Square? It was fun for a while to see my cat sitting on the desk beside me, but is that a good look for an expensive consulting firm on an ongoing basis?

And what about sharing our spaces? We want to keep our office, but now it's too big, void of desks and used only for collaboration. How do we find a complementary sub-lessor? Will there be match-making services that use data to find a good fit? Do we need to interview the potential tenants about their principles and make sure their work, image, and culture align with our company's brand and values? Would these renters co-mingle with us? Would they have their own entrance? Would they eat our Goldfish and drink our kombucha?

As we move from uncertainty to the new normal, these are some of the things we need to start thinking about, talking about, and acting on in order to stay in business.

It will be interesting to watch how we, as humans, adapt. We know we can - I'm just not sure anyone really wants to.



Panel discussion: The future of the workplace

Watch the video recording of a live panel discussion we had on May 14th on these topics, plus a few more. "The Future of the Workplace" presented by BCRA and GeekWire.

Panel description:

We'll have three workplace experts discussing what heading back to the office might look like, as well as ways not just to adapt to our new normal, but to innovate and thrive as we move forward. We'll provide some near-term ideas you can think about to elevate your "back to the office" experience, and to be better positioned for the long term. We'll also discuss how offices may be used only for collaboration, how your brand can be conveyed over Zoom, and what to consider for a successful sublease.

Panelists include Blueprint Technologies Director of Client Development Thomas Hallstrom, Hansen Belyea Principal Brianna Home, and BCRA Interior Designer Stephanie Palmer.