

WHAT WILL THE POST-CORONAVIRUS ARCHITECTURAL WALLS MARKET LOOK LIKE?

Submitted by: Bob Batley, Vice President of Architectural Products, COFCO

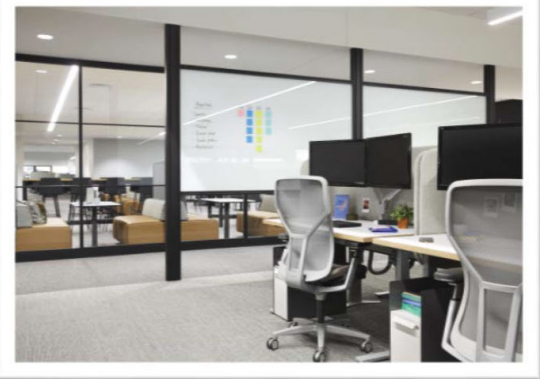
April 31, 2020

How our work environments and the use of architectural (dismountable) walls will change due to the COVID19 pandemic is changing daily (and sometimes hourly). Since many of you have asked my thoughts on the future of office architectural walls, I thought I would point to eight factors to watch. Much like the world changed after 9/11 and the 2008 recession, I fully expect the world to change after this global pandemic. As the world goes back to work and social distancing morphs into professional distancing, (and assuming the economy comes back quickly compared to 2008), I would offer these trends to watch.

- 1. Growth in Wall Market:** While the office footprint will shrink (many people have been working from home, and this will carry forward for some), the use of architectural walls in offices will continue to rise. I have already seen an uptick in inquiries around glass partitions, space separators and demountable offices. This should not be a surprise; glass lets natural light in, shows transparency and is a good space divider. As companies balance expensive office real estate, open floor plans and small group interactions, the real growth will be in open space dividers such as Allsteel Beyond Pavilion and Allsteel Viz
- 2. Room Size Will Shrink:** Conference rooms will morph into smaller huddle and collaboration spaces. Wework is cutting conference rooms in half to keep groups to a manageable and comfortable size. Collaboration will be important...just in smaller groups and with walls that meet the needs.
- 3. Technology:** Video conferencing will continue. Technology will be required in each collaboration space, and it will be important that camera and audio connectivity are seamless. Architectural walls have an important role to play in this transformation, as demountable partitions have great acoustics, technology integration and correct camera angles.
- 4. Traffic Patterns:** More thought will be given to how workers move through and in and out of office spaces. Adding an extra



Pavilion



Viz

“Building Successful Relationships” is our Mission.

The foregoing information was furnished to us by sources which we deem to be reliable, but no warranty or representation is made as to the accuracy thereof. Subject to correction of errors, omissions, change of price, prior sale or withdrawal from market without notice. This article is for informational purposes only. © 2019 WCRE All Rights Reserved

door to a conference room might help as “professional distancing” lingers with us for some time to come.

5. **Air Quality:** Buildings will move away from minimal standards of fresh and clean air. Wall dealers will need to partner with clients and designers around diffuser and circulation locations for better, fresher and cleaner air.
6. **Healthcare Moves to the Office Environment:** Easily cleanable surfaces will be a focus, so there will be fewer fabric wall panels and wall materials that are difficult to clean. Look for manufacturers to follow some of the creative surfaces that healthcare uses and adapt them to business settings.
7. **Fewer Touch points:** COVID-19 has made us keenly aware of how many things we touch every day. One of the most intriguing ways this will manifest itself will be in architectural walls with auto door openers and doors that swing both ways that you can push with your feet.
8. **Changing Materials will be in Focus:** While some amazing new inventions are coming out from Hong Kong around self-cleaning door hardware using both photocatalytic and blacklight technology, older metals like copper, brass and bronze will make a strong comeback.

I am sure I will amend and change this list as we move forward, but it is a good way to get the conversation started. So, what did I miss? What do you see coming? I cannot wait to hear what your predictions!



Bob Batley is the Vice President of Architectural Products at COFCO, a midAtlantic regional commercial furniture and walls solution provider. With over 35 years of executive leadership in the hospitality, commercial construction, and work environment fields, Bob consults, speaks, and is a thought leader when it comes to the challenges of today's fierce competitive work environments. Bob can be reached at BBatley@cofcogroup.com or follow him on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram.



“Building Successful Relationships” is our Mission.

The foregoing information was furnished to us by sources which we deem to be reliable, but no warranty or representation is made as to the accuracy thereof. Subject to correction of errors, omissions, change of price, prior sale or withdrawal from market without notice. This article is for informational purposes only. © 2019 WCRE All Rights Reserved