



## **Member Perspective: REIAC Virtual Fall Event The Modern Workplace – What’s Next?**

**R. Craig Coppola, MBA, CCIM, CRE, SIOR  
Founding Principal: Lee & Associates**

**By Keyvan Ghahreman**

The REIAC Southwest Virtual Fall Event focused on trends in the modern workplace, with an emphasis on the changing office environment considering the effects of COVID-19. Craig Coppola, Founding Principal with Lee & Associates, provided insight into several office trends and how those trends may be accelerating.

The 10 trends highlighted generally fall into three categories: re-design of space, technology/location, and virtual/remote. While some of the changes were already underway before COVID-19, the market is seeing a few changes accelerate due to the impacts of the pandemic.

Flexibility of spaces has been a hot topic in office design, driven by more open and collaborative work environments. While area per person has greatly decreased over the past decade, the trend is moving toward increasing area to promote physical distancing. Also, where open office settings have dominated office design, the concept of “pop-up” partitions is surfacing to accommodate a desire for more privacy and separation.

Migration toward cloud services is also well underway. As the work-from-home model has become more prevalent, the need to have on-site servers and their associated infrastructure has diminished. In this environment, software-as-a-service (SaaS) is witnessing enormous growth.

Craig remarked that very few companies anticipate bringing all associates back to the office on a full-time basis. Many companies plan on associates being in the office one to two days per week. As such, he anticipates the workforce will become increasingly mobile, equipped with laptops and docking stations instead of desktop computers. Workstations will be far less personalized, and desks will be cleaner and free of clutter. The concept of office hoteling has been a struggle to implement for many companies. Craig said he believes that the effects of the pandemic in the office environment will help drive more hoteling success.

Opposing forces will be at work in the office setting moving forward. While some users are implementing an approach of more square footage per person to promote physical distancing, others are focusing on hoteling concepts to accommodate the increased mobile workforce. For the next two to three years, the office market will likely remain uncertain as business navigates “the new normal.”



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