

BUSINESS INSIDER

www.businessinsider.com

June 10, 2020

BI PRIME

5 businesses detailed their reopening plans, including what they're buying, how much it costs per employee, and a floor plan layout showing how it all works

Bartie Scott and Dominick Reuter

- As cities and states ease lockdown restrictions, many businesses will need to invest significant cash to make sure employees and customers stay safe.
- Business Insider spoke with several businesses, compared their numbers, and found that business owners should expect to pay a minimum of about \$300 per employee to get started on their safe reopening plan.
- One architecture firm sent Business Insider a COVID-19 “risk map” that shows a bird’s eye view of how the company is implementing layout changes, safety precautions, and cleaning routines.

All 50 states have begun to loosen lockdown requirements and businesses like gyms, nail salons, restaurants, retail shops, production studios, and some offices are starting to reopen.

For many, reopening is more complicated than social distancing and reduced capacity. In addition to an operational and financial checklist for reopening, many businesses will invest significant cash to make sure employees and customers stay safe.

After speaking with several businesses and comparing their numbers, Business Insider found that business owners should expect to pay a minimum of about \$300 per employee to get started on their safe reopening plan.

Of course, there could be ongoing costs for supplies like masks, gloves, menus, and other disposable supplies. Some businesses may need to shell out more money to upgrade their facilities’ HVAC systems, install partitions, install new touchless faucets and light switches, or hire a consultant to guide them through the process.

For example, Beginnings, a restaurant and bar in Atlantic Beach, New York, spent more than \$26,000 on updates to their outdoor dining space, owners Ben and Heather Freiser said.

Other businesses, like Crazy Legs Production, are preparing to offer COVID-19 testing reimbursements for employees who need it in Atlanta and Los Angeles. Testing costs could range from \$50 to \$150 per kit, Dr. David Zieg, the clinical-services leader and leading consultant at Mercer, previously told Business Insider.

Returning to business as usual without a vaccine could mean



REUTERS/Carlos Osorio

An employee at Zara puts up a sign during a phased reopening from coronavirus on May 19, 2020.

an uptick in transmission, as observed in Los Angeles, so it’s important to plan for every precaution possible. Crazy Legs is also implementing a color-coded wristband system on set to keep unnecessary contact between teams at a minimum.

“The wristbands are just another layer of control management,” chief operating officer Scott Thigpen said. “The more people stay with their color group, the more we are able to provide firewalls.”

Here are three more real-world examples of how small businesses across the US are budgeting for their reopening strategies, including a floor plan and budget from an architecture firm.

A California consulting company is spending \$271 per employee

Canterbury Consulting will spend \$16,000 total to keep 59 employees working through the pandemic and get back to the office safely, mostly on additional technology and health and safety precautions, chief operations officer Mike Etheridge told Business Insider. When Canterbury employees return to the office later this month, they’ll also each receive a backpack that includes a water bottle, hand sanitizer, spray sanitizer, microwave popcorn, a roll of Charmin TP, a wine opener, cloth masks, and a packet of COVID-19 information. The total comes out to about \$271 per employee.



Amenta Emma

Each room is labeled with its max occupancy in pink and green and orange markers indicate locations where people can find disinfectants and PPE. Tyre also included dark green arrows to show suggested walking patterns around the office for optimal social distancing.

For this scenario, Tyre shared price estimates for some must-haves, in addition to some high-tech extras:

- Screening questionnaire, free online options or app-based: \$2 per person per month
- Plexiglass barriers: \$100-\$400 each
- Tall glass partitions: \$1000 per desk
- Screens for more video conferences: \$500-\$2,000 each
- Masks: \$50-\$80 for a box of 100
- Gloves: \$10-\$20 for a box of 100
- Social distancing markers: \$10-\$30 each
- Facial recognition cameras: \$400-\$1,200
- Motion activated light switches: \$100 each
- Motion activated faucets: \$750 each

At the high end, this plan could cost north of \$50,000 for a 40-person office, but Tyre said most companies don't need to incorporate everything pictured. The largest expense by far is the tall glass partitions, which could run up to \$40,000 to equip every workstation. But the cost can be reduced in situations where not every workstation needs a glass wall on three sides and removing them altogether brings the per-employee total down to a more palatable \$320 per employee.

Tyre's office in Connecticut already had several of these measures in place so their price tag was only \$2,000 to prepare for reopening.

"Even before the pandemic, we provided more than six feet of space between all workstations to reduce noise and distractions, which are the chief complaints of open plan office detractors," he said.

Even disposable items like masks and gloves could also add up quickly. After a cursory review of average use numbers, we estimate that each employee will need roughly one mask and a pair of gloves per day. That adds up to about \$900 per quarter to keep a 40-person staff safe.

In addition to necessary precautions, businesses might want to think about morale – a small touch can go a long way. For example, Beginnings restaurateurs Ben and Heather Freiser are purchasing 20 t-shirts for their team at \$20 each that say "Peace, Love, Sanitize."

A Texas manufacturer is spending \$285 per employee

Vari, makers of the sit-stand VariDesk, invested about \$100,000 in barriers, walls, signage, cleaning supplies, temperature checks, and more to update its 82,000-square foot office space near Dallas, Texas, in preparation for 357 employees to return. That comes out to about \$280 per employee.

An architecture firm provided a floorplan to show how a range of budgets could work

Michael B. Tyre, principal at Amenta Emma Architects sent Business Insider a COVID-19 "risk map" for the company's Hartford, Connecticut office. (It also has offices in Boston and New York.) The map shows a bird's eye view of how companies can implement layout changes, safety precautions, and cleaning routines on a variety of budgets.

Tyre pointed out that the necessary precautions will depend on the company's needs. Some may invest in more video conferencing equipment; others may need to hire additional cleaning staff for high-touch locations.

"Larger companies with over 100 employees are realizing how many of their staff interface with frequently-touched surfaces or equipment and are utilizing motion activated restroom fixtures and light switches," he said.

Plexiglass dividers are a common investment, as are floor markers to help people maintain a six-foot distance. Tyre provided a breakdown of the investments involved in a reopening, including costs and a floorplan of how it can all work together.