

# Workplace Safety, Tactics, and Strategies



DesignIntelligence®  
Quarterly





## PETER BECK

Executive Chairman,  
Managing Director, Beck Group

*In this candid discussion, Beck CEO Peter Beck shares rapid-response measures implemented in office and jobsite workplaces, as well as future-focused implications – and responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

**DesignIntelligence (DI):** Thank you for taking the time to do this.

**Peter Beck (PB):** I'm focusing my energy over the next few months on the civic and business challenges for which I'm responsible. I'm having to thoughtfully prioritize my time given the fluidity and uncertainty of these times.

**DI:** Understood. You have already made some immediate changes for enhanced workplace safety. I saw photos of onsite physical distancing, temperature checks, signage, and other measures already in effect on a jobsite. How were you able to develop and implement those tactics so quickly?

**PB:** Yes. I've just sent you the initial protocols we're adopting on construction projects. Construction is considered an "essential" business in many parts of the country during this pandemic. To continue building, we must adopt the safest practices we can through screening and quarantining. It would not surprise me to see many of these practices adopted across many industries as we begin to "open back up". We had the people, processes, and systems already in place, so it was only a matter of adapting. It's simply a heightened, more focused set of behaviors now. We must anticipate crises as a matter of course.

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Jobsite — Temperature Check Station



Jobsite — Handwash Station

pandemic could dramatically impact demand for various types of space, cause us to think more carefully about how to quickly repurpose space in the future, and perhaps redefine ownership in projects of the future where the public assumes the cost of redundant space to ensure community safety, while the private sector underwrites space required in normal times.

**DI:** Can you elaborate on the issue of repurposing space? It seems that would require an owner willing to invest in a more robust infrastructure, flexible systems - and reprioritizing traditional past values from first cost, user-specific and purely architectural treatments to ones of flexibility, function, adaptability, and safety awareness. As a design-build organization have you investigated any of these issues yet? Are you initiating such work as an owner or finding any like-minded owners or new forms of partnerships to do what you're imagining?

**PB:** It's far too early to project how such public-private partnerships might evolve, but we can be fairly certain that we will need more healthcare capacity in the future than that required in normal times. Government should underwrite this

additional capacity and there is no more efficient way to do it than through the private sector.

**DI:** You have always had a future-focused outlook to the design and construction process. Incorporation of design integrally within your organization and early technology leadership are just two aspects that come to mind. Do you see this in-house, vertically-integrated-approach as offering cultural, financially or strategic advantages to other firm models and operational modes? Because contrarily, one could imagine - in a post-pandemic industry - the opposite as advantages. Being smaller, nimbler with discrete, more liquid corporate components.

**PB:** You make some very good points. I can see the advantages of being smaller and nimbler in a post-pandemic world for large, consolidated industries. But our industry is so fragmented across so many disciplines, that integration across just a few critical disciplines dramatically increases efficiencies. We need to integrate regardless of what the world will look like. Through the limited integration we and others have achieved, we see remarkable reductions in schedules and costs, and most importantly, far greater





6-foot distancing separation



efficiencies in decision making by better integrating the supply chain into the design process.

**DI:** What advice do you have for leaders? Not just about safety, but about their core roles as leaders? In an unprecedented Black Swan/Star Trek environment, we're boldly going where no one has gone before. On whom or what do you draw to set strategy in uncharted territory?

**PB:** I think it would be a mistake to assume that the post-pandemic world will be some completely transformed environment. Yes, many great restaurants, hotel chains, and perhaps airlines may no longer exist, but others will take their place.

Instead, I believe this crisis will accelerate trends which have been building for some time. Online retail will expand dramatically as more of us appreciate the value and convenience we've recently realized. As a result, repurposing malls and strip retail spaces will accelerate in the coming years. Online work will also accelerate as we're learning how to do it efficiently; perhaps resulting in more time with our families and less intense travel schedules. Public and private education

**BECK** TRADE PARTNER AND SITE VISITOR SCREENING  
Answer these questions before entering the jobsite for your daily visit

In an effort to protect you and the communities we serve, The Beck Group is proactively aiming to reduce COVID-19 exposures with your help, based on responses to the following questions:

Please answer the following:

Do you feel sick/ ill? ..... YES / NO

Have you been in contact with anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19? ..... YES / NO

Have you traveled outside the country in the last 30 days? ..... YES / NO

☐ If yes, what country? .....

**BECK** EXAMEN DEL SOCIO COMERCIAL Y VISITANTE DEL SITIO  
Responda a estas preguntas antes de entrar al sitio para su visita diaria

Para protegerlo a usted y a las comunidades que servimos, Grupo Beck está realizando evaluaciones a TODOS nuestros socios (subcontratistas, consultores, vendedores y visitantes) para entrar a este lugar de trabajo

Responda a las siguientes preguntas:

¿Te sientes enfermo(a) o con mal estar? ..... SI / NO

¿Ha tenido contacto con alguien que haya resultado positivo con COVID-19? ..... SI / NO

¿Ha estado fuera del país en los últimos 30 días? ..... SI / NO

Trade Partner Questionnaire



will likely move online more rapidly as today's students embrace the convenience of learning wherever they wish.

Can you imagine an efficient public education system that provides online content for 60% of the day (created by the best 1% of educators) in smaller spaces (monitored by proctors) through strip centers conveniently located in neighborhoods? Then we would no longer need those expensive school buildings and all the costs associated with them including the staff to operate our current bureaucracy. The cost of education might meaningfully decline, while the quality may improve dramatically - particularly for those most disadvantaged.

In a more global context, this crisis may cause countries to repatriate manufacturing of essential products (pharmaceuticals for sure). Nationalistic trends will likely accelerate along with the associated polarization of society. Democracies may accelerate towards socialism, which has been the trend, as more voters lose confidence in the private sector to service their needs, believing that governments are more reliable. Main Street still feels victimized by the Great Recession. And the U.S. will accelerate its withdrawal from global leadership as it

tries to protect itself. Our government is doing just that in this crisis by reacting independently from other nations.

These are all trends that have been evolving for years, but they will accelerate now due to this crisis. We may not like some or most of this, but it will work out fine for those who try to understand it and prepare for it. I have no doubt that many new ideas currently being incubated will flourish to our benefit as we emerge from this crisis.

This is a time to learn from others and reflect on how the acceleration of these trends will create a new landscape for all of us. Let's hope we don't lose the good things we've learned during this crisis as we get back to work.

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Peter Beck is Executive Chairman of The Beck Group, a national design-build firm headquartered in Dallas.

