



BOMA NY: From virus to value - by Hani Salama

September 08, 2020 - Owners Developers & Managers

Hani Salama

BOMA New York is all digital and adding value to its members and the industry. The pandemic changed life as we knew it and the early months brought some ambiguity. Since the beginning and in conjunction with scheduling relevant digital content, our primary focus has been tracking the issues related to the Coronavirus and sharing that valuable information with members.

To date, BOMA New York has emailed more than 90 alerts to members informing them of best practices for staying healthy; changes to DOB and other agency procedures; information about employee benefits under federal, state, and local laws; and updates regarding critical work/employees. BOMA New York will continue to be at the forefront of all conversations and will share news and updates as they are available.

BOMA New York is attracting hundreds of members to every webinar. From the monthly Lunch & Learns to the Green & Wellness content, BOMA New York is engaging its members. Most recently, at the Q2 Virtual Seminar—"Adaptive Workplace Strategies: Planning for Today & Post-COVID"—BOMA NY welcomed thought leaders from multiple companies to help guide building owners and managers forward. Approximately 180 members signed up for this virtual seminar.

Moderated by Drew O'Connor, senior managing director at Cushman & Wakefield—he opened with "The Safe Six" and over-emphasized the importance of communicating with confidence. O'Connor touched upon the rediscovered need for the office and the collaborative plan for the pendulum to swing back towards greater occupancy. O'Connor regularly reminded the webinar viewers to focus on the fundamentals and also addressed the need to appreciate reality versus perception—saying that CRE leaders need to understand fear-based-perceptions in order to effectively welcome back tenants and visitors.

Adam Foster, EVP of CBRE, provided a comprehensive leasing update. He said that while many companies in NYC are downsizing or rightsizing—there have been no exits to date. He noted, not counting the 730,000 s/f recent lease by Facebook, the majority of deals in 2020 have been renewals versus new deals and expects that trend to continue. Adam spent time reviewing the flex

and agile segment of the industry—saying that “flex is here to stay.” Keeping the message positive, Foster shared that there are new active searches in play for 6.85 million s/f. He said that we will see a flight to quality with most new leases inking space in new construction that will likely offer the best indoor air quality.

During the comprehensive webinar, Haniel Lynn, CEO of Kastle Systems, reviewed the four pillars of SafeSpaces: Social distancing, touchless system, screen in/screen out, and contact tracing. Lynn explained that Kastle has been focused on the touchless experience for the past five-years, saying that health and wellness is a huge part of the tenant experience. He also reviewed other efforts he and his company are working on to make all tenants and visitors feel more comfortable as they return to work.

Andrea Barragan and Jamie Wekerle, from Nouveau Elevator, described many efforts to eliminate cross-contamination on elevators and escalators. From touchless solutions to the use of UV lighting and other redundant technologies.

Andrew Mondell, PE, an engineer from Trane, simplified multiple action steps during the webinar that owners and managers can do to improve indoor air quality and reduce micro-biologicals. He discussed demand control ventilation (DCV); 100% intake of outdoor air; operating the ventilation system 24/7; best practices for full building air flush; using a MERV 13 or greater; and UVGI. He also reminded the tuned-in audience to be mindful of while solving one issue to make sure that the solution does not create another issue—either operationally or budgetary.

Christopher Prochner, a partner at Jaros, Baum & Bolles, reviewed different infection modes of COVID-19, as well as provided a high-level overview of how to optimize directional airflow during the webinar. He highlighted VAV systems, humidification levels and photo-catalytic oxidation (PCO). He said that while each method is effective, none are a silver bullet. He said that when operators combine technology properly, everyone still needs to practice social distancing and wear a mask.

Alana Genderson, an associate from Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, reviewed the legal component to building operations. With a continued focus on staying protected, Genderson discussed COVID-19 liability for employers and provided a review of the myriad of claims a company can face as a result of the virus.

BOMA New York has plans for more engaging webinars that will review building operations, legal issues, the evolution of coworking, tech innovations and more.

Hani Salama, P.E., LEED AP is with Capital Properties, and is BOMA NY chair & CEO, New York, N.Y.