

Ensuring a Safe Return to Office Through Strategic Collaboration

Ensuring a safe and secure return to the office (RTO) — now several years beyond the pandemic’s peak — involves far more than unlocking doors and posting mask guidelines. It has evolved into a complex, cross-functional challenge that requires deep collaboration across security, legal, HR, compliance, and IT teams. The nature of workplace risk has changed, and so must the way organizations prepare for it.

Today’s corporate security leaders face a broader, more dynamic in-office environment — from navigating hybrid schedules to addressing growing concerns around workplace violence and employee well-being. These challenges cannot be tackled in silos. Effective risk mitigation now hinges on strong partnerships across departments, with shared responsibilities and ongoing communication at the core.

To support that effort, this checklist is designed to guide cross-functional collaboration and help your teams align on RTO strategy. It outlines key questions to spark the right conversations, clarify roles and responsibilities, and ensure your return-to-office plans are proactive, inclusive, and built for today’s realities.

Cybersecurity and IT

As physical and digital environments converge, close coordination with cybersecurity and IT teams is essential to address risks like badge tailgating, device vulnerabilities, and sensitive data exposures.

Have your access control systems evolved to handle variable schedules and hybrid badge management?	
What processes are in place to track who is onsite each day (contractors, hybrid workers, vendors), especially for emergency response scenarios?	
Have you assessed the security implications of evolving AI (like voice assistants, smart devices, and generative AI) in the workplace?	
Are you training staff to recognize insider threat indicators, including hybrid work abuse or badge tailgating?	
Are there secure offboarding procedures in place to ensure timely revocation of access and protection of company data?	
Do you have playbooks in place for on-site incidents that might trigger both physical and cyber responses?	



The Ontic Platform seamlessly integrates with access control systems to provide your team with real-time insights into access activity — helping you identify patterns, detect anomalies, and better understand onsite behavior across your facilities.



Legal, Compliance, and Risk

Legal and compliance teams help navigate regulatory requirements, liability concerns, and evolving workplace policies — critical for building a compliant RTO plan.

Are your workplace safety policies updated to reflect post-pandemic regulatory changes, AI usage governance, and expanded data privacy obligations?	
Have you reviewed your organization's duty of care and liability posture concerning hybrid work arrangements?	
How are visitor management and third-party access policies enforced and documented?	
Are you prepared to comply with state or international laws concerning RTO mandates, remote work accommodation, or DEI-related litigation?	
Have you conducted a risk audit across both physical and virtual work environments?	

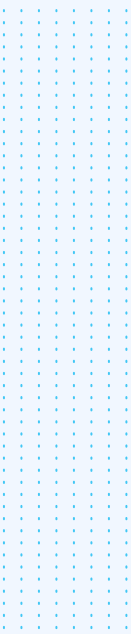
Human Resources

HR plays a vital role in communicating policy, supporting employee wellbeing, and setting the tone for culture in the return-to-office transition.

How are you monitoring sentiment and behavioral risk indicators tied to RTO mandates?	
Is there a centralized platform or team managing health, wellness, safety, and workforce communication?	
How are leaders modeling presence, transparency, and adaptability in navigating RTO?	
Are employees trained on the signs of workplace violence and empowered to use incident reporting tools?	
Is there a clear process in place for responding to concerning employee behaviors, including coordination with security and behavioral threat assessment teams?	
Are HR and IT aligned on collaboration equity measures that support workforce inclusion — reducing friction and disengagement that may affect workplace culture and behavioral risk?	
Do employees have access to holistic wellbeing support — including access to mental health services and crisis assistance?	



The Ontic Platform simplifies cross-functional collaboration with HR and other teams by providing shared access to critical data that may serve as early warning signs of RTO-related risks, such as reported behavioral changes by managers.

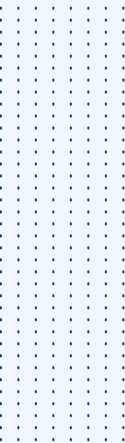


Facility Readiness and Response Planning

Facility readiness, emergency preparedness, and communication protocols are also essential for providing a safe workplace ahead of your organization’s RTO. Some of these may require collaboration with facilities or even local law enforcement.

Have fire drills, evacuation plans, and emergency response procedures been updated for hybrid schedules and new office layouts?	
Are security staffing levels adjusted to reflect occupancy changes and peak in-office days?	
Have all life safety systems — alarms, access control, surveillance — been tested and verified since the office’s return to regular use?	
Are physical risk assessments current for all entry points and shared workspaces?	
Is there a communication plan in place to quickly alert employees in the event of nearby protests, extreme weather, or other unexpected external disruptions?	

Ultimately, organizations that treat RTO as a cross-functional security initiative — not just an operational directive — will be best positioned to support their people and reduce risk. Use these considerations to guide discussions, identify blind spots, and strengthen your workplace readiness.



Ready to see how the Ontic Platform can centralize threat-related data, streamline collaboration across departments, and improve decision-making? Schedule a demo today.

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