



Right Networks®

eBook

## **Goodbye, Michael Scott:** Why Your Office Will Probably Never be Like “The Office” Again



## Goodbye, Michael Scott.

The NBC sitcom “[The Office](#),” perhaps more popular now than it was during its original run from 2005-2013, could end up being more than just a humorous look at daily work life. It could prove to be a (marginally fictional) documentation of some of the final days of office life before COVID-19 changed everything.

The response to the pandemic has shut down offices all over the world, driving computer-bound employees to work at home in record numbers.

As some of those offices slowly begin to reopen, they’re not likely to resemble the office—or The Office—of old. [Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) on reopening workplaces paint a picture of a radically changed office environment.

### **Eight moments from The Office that might never be possible again.**

In the following eBook, with credit to the ground-breaking writers of The Office, and the fandom of [Dunderpedia](#), we’ll look at eight iconic moments from The Office that simply wouldn’t have happened in 2020—and might never be possible again.

Stay tuned until the very end and learn how your business can avoid many of these guidelines altogether, while still keeping employees safe, healthy, and a lot more productive than Michael G. Scott on pretzel day.



1 .

## **Michael invites a camera crew to document what life is like at a paper supply company in Scranton, PA.**

*Season 1, Episode 1*

For starters, it's unlikely that the whole crew would ever be in the office at the same time, given the CDC's recommendations of staggered shifts. And when employees do show up, they'll likely have to wear face masks all day, submit to temperature checks at the door and even try to keep distance from each other in elevators. It's a recipe for a workday of discomfort and inconvenience, not to mention trepidation and fear. None of that even gets into what businesses will need to do, or spend, to comply with extensive CDC guidelines about HVAC systems and other structure-related issues.

### **CDC Guideline**

- Consider conducting daily in-person or virtual health checks of employees before they enter the work site.
- Stagger shifts, start times, and break times as feasible to reduce the number of employees in common areas.



2.

### Michael and Dwight drive into a lake after Michael misinterprets directions from a GPS.

*Season 4, Episode 3*

While nobody would be particularly nostalgic about driving into a lake, the greater point here is that under new CDC guidelines, Michael and Dwight wouldn't have been in the same car to begin with. The CDC discourages employees from commuting via public transport or even carpooling, strongly encouraging them instead to drive to work alone. Granted, Michael and Dwight were doing sales visits (something else that might disappear for good, or at least become much more complicated), but in post-COVID world, they would have been

in separate vehicles. That also means the days of hopping into a co-worker's car and going out for lunch or an after-work drink are likely gone.

#### CDC Guideline

- Limit the number of passengers in the vehicle to only those necessary.
- Avoid pooled rides or rides where multiple passengers are picked up who are not in the same household.

3.

### Pam, Oscar and Toby enjoy literature, fine dining and fancy flatware as part of the Finer Things Club.

*Season 4, Episode 10*

The most exclusive club in The Office would break a lot of CDC rules. The kitchen table where the Finer Things Club meets would probably be gone given the CDC's ban on employees gathering in close contact.

Also, the reusable silverware and flatware the club uses would post a COVID hazard would probably be forbidden. And shared finger foods? Forget about that. Hands reaching out to a communal serving tray is a strong violation of CDC rules.

At least Andy wouldn't have to be upset about being banned from the club—it wouldn't exist.

#### CDC Guideline

- Arrange chairs in communal seating areas by turning, draping (covering chair with tape or fabric so seats cannot be used), spacing, or removing chairs to maintain social distancing.



4 .

### **Kevin brings a huge vat of his famous chili into the office but famously spills it on the floor.**

*Season 5, Episode 26*

This is another big no-no. While floor chili would never prove popular, Kevin's famous chili would never have had the chance to be a taste sensation in the CDC-approved office. The CDC forbids offerings of communal food, as well as the use of high-touch objects, such as coffee makers, water coolers or, presumably, the ladle in Kevin's chili pot.

Instead, the CDC suggests offering individually wrapped food items, served, again, in places where employees can't gather to eat them.

#### **CDC Guidelines**

- Replace high-touch communal items, such as coffee pots and bulk snacks, with alternatives such as pre-packaged, single-serving items.



- Encourage staff to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains or consider installing no-touch activation methods for water fountains.



5 .

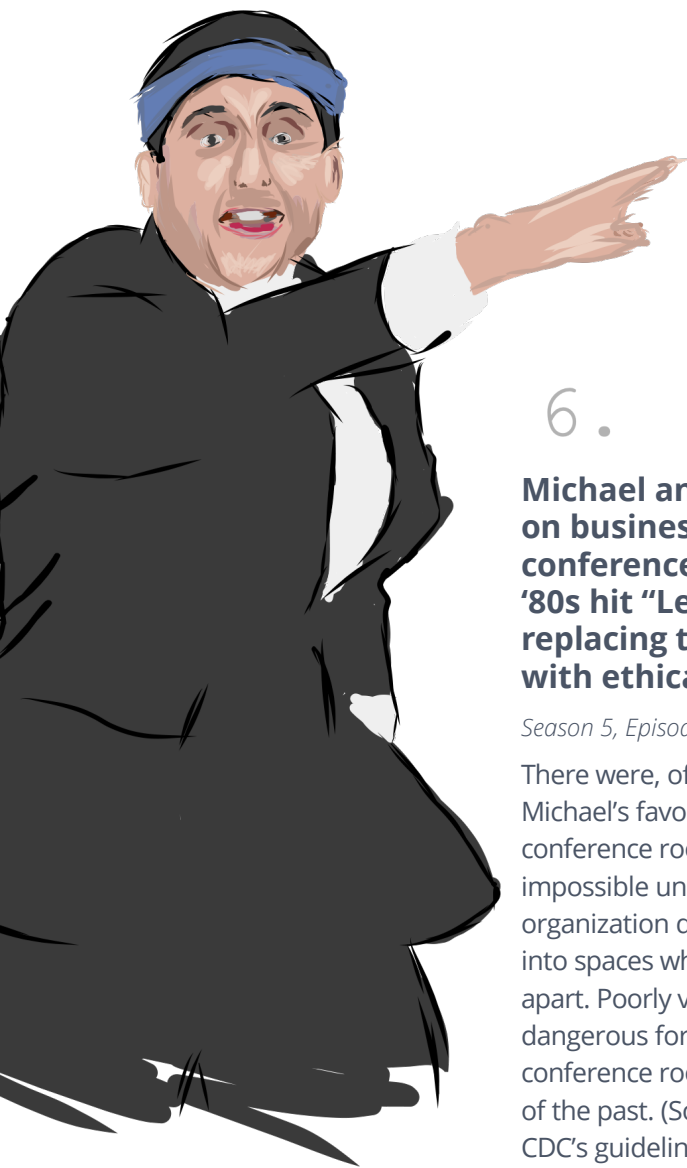
### **Pam shuts down the infamous party-planning committee, which has been a constant source of office political intrigue and machinations.**

*Season 7, Episode 12*

There won't be a party-planning committee without parties, which the CDC basically forbids in its guidelines. The CDC's rules place strict social-distancing measures in place, prohibiting employees from coming within six feet of each other and essentially shutting down common areas. Desks have to be at least six feet apart, and if that's not possible, they need to be separated by plexiglass. None of that lends itself to casual office fun, committee or no committee.

#### **CDC Guideline**

- Close shared spaces such as break rooms, if possible; otherwise stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.



6.

**Michael and Holly give a seminar on business ethics in the conference room, singing the '80s hit "Let's Get Physical," but replacing the word "physical" with ethical.**

*Season 5, Episode 3*

There were, of course, many meetings in Michael's favorite place to hold court: the conference room. But those meetings would be impossible under CDC guidelines. The organization discourages crowding employees into spaces where they can't sit at least six feet apart. Poorly ventilated spaces are also especially dangerous for COVID-19 spread, so full conference rooms would likely be a phenomenon of the past. (So, not all of the consequences of the CDC's guidelines would be negative, except for people who really love being crammed into conference rooms.)

**CDC Guidelines**

- Identify work and common areas where employees could have close contact (within 6 feet) with others.
- Use methods to physically separate employees in all areas of the building, such as meeting rooms, and use visual cues, placed 6 feet apart, to show where to stand when physical barriers are not possible.





7.

### Michael challenges the warehouse staff to a game of basketball versus the office staff, with the loser working the weekend.

*Season 1, Episode 5*

With social distancing strictly in place, intra-office basketball games or indoor extracurricular events of almost any kind (including Jim's Office Olympics) would be forbidden, particularly in enclosed and presumably poorly ventilated spaces such as a warehouses. And Jim's innumerable pranks on Dwight would also be unlikely, given that the CDC strongly discourages employees from touching each other's desks.

### CDC Guidelines

- If playing inside, ensure ventilation systems or fans operate properly.
- Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.
- Minimize equipment sharing, and clean and disinfect shared equipment between use by different people.

8.

### Michael and Dwight attend the Northeastern Mid-Market Office Supply Convention.

*Season 3, Episode 2*

Let's start with the "slow train" down to Philadelphia. Per the CDC, traveling on public transit *outside of your local community* increases your chances of getting and spreading COVID-19. Social distancing is harder to maintain when packed onto a bus, train, or airplane—and can often be impossible.

Even if Michael and Dwight were able to take their own cars, they may find that the convention's been canceled, or turned virtual, as large in-person events pose the highest risk of spread.

### CDC Guideline

- Avoid and/or cancel in-person gatherings where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and attendees travel from outside the local area.



**In conclusion, our philosophy is, basically this. And this is something Right Networks lives by. And we always have. And we always will.**

**Don't ever, for any reason, do anything, to anyone, for any reason, ever, no matter what, no matter where, or who, or who you are with, or where you are going, or, or where you have been. Ever. For any reason. Whatsoever...**



... do something that will jeopardize the health and safety of your employees and customers.

Everything considered, it's probably easier and cheaper for businesses to ditch offices altogether—at least for the foreseeable future—and run in the cloud.

Right Networks makes that possible, enabling small businesses and accounting firms to host QuickBooks Desktop and other key application in the cloud, with employees working comfortably and indefinitely at home, or from anywhere, if that's what they choose or need to do.

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