



Guidelines for Reopening

Tips for how to reopen your company in a way to protect your workforce, your customers, and your business.

As businesses prepare to reopen, there are many things an owner or CEO should be thinking about. Going back to the way it was will not be happening anytime soon. How will your business need to adjust to be successful? How are you preparing for the safety of your employees and customers? How are you communicating to your employees and customers? Do you have a plan for how you are going to deal with Day 1 back in the office?

We hope that the resources contained in these guidelines will assist you in preparing for these changes. Not all businesses are the same. The preparations that a restaurant has to take are different to that of a sports franchise or a manufacturing company. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide you general direction and specific ideas on what you should be thinking about as you prepare for your reopening. This guide is not intended to establish specific standards for your business.

These guidelines were developed via research conducted by your Cobb Chamber staff as well as a taskforce of community leaders that came together to collaborate with Cobb & Douglas Public Health to develop these ideas. We will focus on a number of essential areas:

1. Prepare your business
2. Prepare your workforce
3. Prepare your workspace
4. Prepare for mitigating the spread of the virus
5. Prepare for phasing your reopening

This information being presented here is provided based upon public health guidance we are receiving right now. The COVID-19 pandemic is continually evolving and science is learning more day by day that will help us guide and prepare your business. You may need to alter the plans you develop based upon new guidance from the CDC and other public health agencies so do not think of your plans as static documents, but as starting points to prepare your business for the future.



Prepare your business

Business mid- and post-pandemic will be different from what it was back in January or February of 2020. Some are saying that the entire world will change due to this crisis and some think that they will just be able to go back to normal. Most likely, it will be somewhere in between. In the short term, as the country works together to get business going again at the same time that the virus continues to impact lives and families, we will see changes to the way businesses operate. Before we get into some of the ways to you can change your operations to keep your employees and customers safe, it is important for you to look at and consider the fundamentals of your business first.

- Update your business plan

Most businesses do not plan for this type of major disruption in their business plan. Most business plans are growth strategies that do not take into account the costs and loss of opportunity that has accompanied this pandemic. Take a look at your business plan, update for the current reality, and truly understand how you can help your business survive and grow in this new reality.

- Review your financials

With many businesses seeking funding from the federal CARES ACT, there is now a need for reporting on how those monies were utilized. SBA (Small Business Administration) has very specific guidelines on how and for what this money can be used for. You will need to prove this to the SBA in order to have some of these monies act as a grant vs a loan. It is vital that your book keeping and accounting is up-to-date and accurate to assist you with your required reporting.

- Prepare for reopening

It is unlikely that you will be able to just call up your employees and tell them to show up to work on Monday. This is a more complex epidemic than that. Your employees and customers may have anxiety about all that is happening around them or have challenges in their ability to come back to work. With schools and day cares remaining closed, summer camps in limbo, and you not knowing the health conditions of your employees or their loved ones, there is a need for empathy and being strategic about how you prepare for reopening so that everyone's safety is kept in consideration. Have a plan for how you can make this happen and really think through your operations to create a safe work environment through the suggestions contained herein. There are other guidelines that are created to support specific industries, you may want to consider choosing one that aligns with your industry specific needs and follow those guidelines.

- Review supply chains

Supply chains are under pressure right now. It's important you have multiple providers of a resource that is the core of your business. Consider partnering with other businesses to



share a vendor contract. That will make your order larger and a higher priority to the provider and may help to reduce the costs of goods.

- Communications with customers

Be sure that you proactively communicate your plans on protecting your visitors and customers. Update your website, send out Facebook and other social media posts, add signage to your entry way, etc. This will help make visitors and customers feel more comfortable about visiting your establishment knowing that you are taking precautions to ensure their safety and they will understand the new procedures you are putting in place.

Prepare your workforce

One of the most important aspect of the reopening of your business is your employees. Many employees will have fears and concerns about returning to an environment that contains many people. They may be concerned about their personal health or the health of a loved one and that will be expressed through anxiety. Compounded with that is the general stress society is experiencing due to high unemployment, job insecurity, and changes to entire industry sectors. It is imperative that Owners, CEOs, and HR leaders acknowledge, listen, and communicate with their employees. Here are some strategies to assist in communicating with your employees in this environment and preparing them for returning to work.

1. Communicate early in the process
 - a. Educate your staff on the reopening plan you are creating;
 - b. Provide details and reasoning, not just general overviews;
 - c. Communicate using a variety of communication methods; and/or
 - d. Provide an opportunity for staff to have input into the new workplace practices. They may bring up an important point you were not aware of or did not think about.
2. Proactive virtual training
 - a. Conduct virtual training with your employees prior to returning to the workplace to relieve stress and anxiety about the change and
 - b. Remind employees of benefits and share any benefits changes.
3. Day one training
 - a. Provide ongoing training on changes in the workplace consistently so that you are reinforcing the message and show how safety is now an important component in the new environment.
 - b. Encourage employees to participate in and comply with new practices and procedures.
 - c. Develop specific training for front-line and reception personnel.



General important points to cover in your communication include:

- Why groups or individual employees were selected to return to work (if applicable), per the executive order by Governor Kemp.
- How the company is following CDC and public health guidelines.
- Measures being taken to ensure the safety of employees returning to work.
- Overview of what to expect when employees return to work (new entrance protocols, what will be supplied to employees, instructions for bringing equipment and items into the workplace, changes to the work environment regarding room usage, new policies, etc).

Prepare your workplace

A new wrinkle for owners, CEOs, and others is that this is most likely the first time they are dealing with an issue that may have major human physical safety issues. This is new territory for many and it is important to acknowledge the shift in mindset that is necessary to successfully handle this issue. It is vital that all businesses put in place procedures, policies, and processes to mitigate your employees or customers transmission or contracting the virus while in your space. People need to feel physically safe in order to relax in their environment and maximize productivity. Here are some ways, supported by public health professionals, that it can be accomplished. This will be broken down into a few areas: social distancing, protective equipment, and mitigating the virus.

- Social distancing

The following are recommendations to encourage social distancing in the workplace:

- Follow CDC recommendations wherever possible – 6' separation between employees;
- If necessary, adjust the physical layout of your space to facilitate social distancing;
- Prohibit hand shaking, hugging, or embraces with friends, visitors, or co-workers;
- If needed, create one-way hallways to avoid people crossing one another too closely;
- Stagger work shifts and entrances/exits, if possible;
- Generate elevator protocols to address the number of people in an elevator and encourage the use of stairs when possible, also consider requiring masks in elevators;
- Continue teleworking, if possible;
- Continue virtual meetings, if possible;
- Rethinking common use areas and equipment such as:
 - Limit the number of people in a breakroom;
 - Close the breakroom altogether;



- Disinfect all items before and after use;
- Remove tables and chairs to the extent needed to promote social distancing.
- Consider controlling the number of customers in your establishment to promote social distancing;
- Remove chairs in conference rooms and other meeting spaces to the extent needed to promote social distancing; and/or
- Place floor markers or stanchions to assure customers remain 6 feet apart when standing in line for services at your business.

- Protective equipment

The following are recommendations on protective equipment:

- Require the use of cloth masks for all employees as well as clients/guests who are not able to maintain a 6 foot distance during interactions.
 - Cloth masks are appropriate for most work environments. Please do not wear N95 masks or surgical masks. Please save those for healthcare workers and public safety personnel.
- Disposable gloves
 - Gloves are not recommended by public health experts unless very specific protocols are in place for the frequent, safe disposal, and replacement of gloves due to your individual industry standards.
 - Gloves provide a false sense of security to employees and are just as likely to transmit the virus as a bare hand. The best protection is frequent handwashing and the use of hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) when handwashing is not possible.
- Daily tests
 - Suggest temperature reading protocols for employees;
 - Observation of overt symptoms; and/or
 - Confirmation of screenings, if necessary.
- Additional tests may be recommended periodically once technology improves
 - COVID tests and/or antibody tests.

- Mitigating the virus

The following are recommendations to mitigate the virus spreading in the workplace:

- Mandate all employees that are sick to stay at home and post signage that discourages clients/guests from entering your facilities if they are feeling ill/exhibiting COVID 19-like symptom



- Create a clean desk policy for all employees that focuses on regular disinfecting of workplace items such as computers, keyboards, etc.
- Require high contact items brought into the office from the outside be disinfected by the employee upon entrance into the workspace.
- Support no-touch options for timeclocks and payment processes whenever possible.
- Disinfection protocols
 - Several times a day, disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as:
 - Light and power switches;
 - Door handles and drawer handles;
 - Affix doors to an open position or add alternative openers, where possible
 - Conference phones, room reservation panels, and hardware remotes;
 - Chairs and tables; and/or
 - Printers and copiers.
 - Disinfect meetings rooms, conference rooms, and training rooms after each use
 - Include conference phones,
 - Room reservation panels, and
 - Hardware remotes.
 - Schedule regular cleanings of the breakroom
 - Maintain a stock of proper disinfecting supplies such as:
 - Sanitizer;
 - Disposable towels; and
 - Disinfecting wipes.
- Place hand sanitizing stations strategically through your workspace to allow for frequent disinfecting of hands.
- Assure bathrooms are adequately stocked with soap and disposable towels or drying vents. Post signage to remind employees and guests as to proper handwashing protocols
- Guests in the workplace
 - Discourage unnecessary entry of guests where possible;
 - Require all guest to sanitize their hands prior to entering and leaving the workspace;
 - Develop signage explaining procedures to guests/visitors to the workspace; and



- Require all guests to have cloth masks or other PPE appropriate to your industry standard prior to entering your establishment.
- Generate specific procedures for dealing with employees or guests that start to exhibit symptoms in the workplace
 - If someone begins to exhibit COVID-19 symptoms while at your office, the first course of action is to ask them leave the facility, quarantine, and seek attention from a medical provider
 - Designate a quarantine room in your facility for individuals who exhibit more severe symptoms and ensure that the ill person has a cloth mask. Designate procedures for obtaining the necessary medical support and transportation for the impacted individual;
 - Trace all individuals that may have been working with or have been in close contact (i.e., less than 6 feet/more than 10 minutes) with the person exhibiting symptoms;
 - Determine the protocols your company will use for isolating the potentially impacted individuals from the rest of the staff members for the two weeks recommended by public health experts; and
 - Have information to access to testing sites readily available.
- Continue to promote individual hygiene throughout the workplace.
- Generate procedures for how to deal with employees that do not comply with the new procedures.

Phasing in your workforce

Phasing your employees return to work may occur naturally for some companies and may need to be managed by others. No two businesses or industries are alike so it is important for you to understand how you may want to manage this process. Below are some suggestions on how you could manage the process in a manner that takes your employees needs into account.

- Employees who should remain at home
 - Vulnerable employees or employees with vulnerable individuals living with them (i.e. employees who have health conditions that may make them vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus) should remain sheltered in place and telework if possible, per any Executive Order or CDC recommendation;
 - Employees who lack childcare or eldercare options; or
 - Continue to encourage teleworking, if possible.
- In order to keep proper social distancing, you may slowly phase employees back to work. Start with employees who require the following:



- Employees who must be at a worksite to personally deliver a service or conduct their job or
- Employees who need the structure of the work environment to increase productivity;

Additional resources

[CDC guidelines for businesses](#)

[OSHA guidelines for businesses](#)

