

Quick Reference Guide

What technology helps you keep employees safe and showing up for work during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Prepared by



As essential businesses, convenience stores show up every day to keep America running. We stay open, and we continue to serve our communities.

The Initial Pivot

To be able to do so during COVID-19, retailers have done their best to pivot to keep their employees and customers safe. Stores have added plexiglass shields, masks are now part of the uniform, and hand sanitizer now sits at every POS station. Due to the lower foot traffic, many stores have also managed to add new cleaning procedures without adding staff, which is fortunate because, on the other hand, retailers who have needed additional staff have struggled both to hire and keep their employees due to the pandemic's extra unemployment benefits. Let's be honest: None of us wants to be exposed to COVID-19 every day, and our store employees are no exception.

Training employees safely, with many tasks in convenience stores requiring face to face training, has been another new challenge this year. Cheryl Szczesniak, Exec VP of Human Resources for The Spinx Company, shared they changed as much of their training as possible to virtual in order to safeguard employees during Covid-19. When their leader training (based on 9 core competencies) became virtual, onboarding for support staff also became virtual. The foodservice training for Spinx does still require a hands-on approach. But, they have task guides with QR codes (a QR code is a two-dimensional barcode that when scanned links to electronic information about the item to which it is attached) that will lead to instructional videos, and foodservice staff can re-watch those videos if they forget the process.

The Second Wave

Solid communication tools are critically important as we face the second wave of COVID-19. In trying to keep teams safe, retailers have needed to quickly and efficiently contact front-line workers about any ill or quarantined co-workers to plan (and often re-plan) new schedules. Some retailers were already using apps to communicate with staff and were ahead of the game, but many chains have struggled to manage all of their communications, especially when they need to reach

across multiple states. One frequently reported solution has been to add an employee group on their mobile app to simplify this process and then to follow up by providing extra incentives to front-line employees to use the new mobile app functionality.

With the second wave, it's also time to reinvigorate safety and cleaning procedures. Cases of COVID-19 are rising while, simultaneously, our society is facing COVID-19 exhaustion. People are sick and tired of hearing about people being sick and tired, and we grow collectively weary of all the restrictions and safety procedures. According to the CDC, the second wave of the 1918 flu was deadlier than the first.¹ During October of 1918 alone, one of the deadliest months in American history, 195,000 Americans died. The very next month marked the end of the World War I, and Armistice Day (November 11, 1918) enabled another resurgence as soldiers finally came home.

What's Next?

Closer to the boardroom (and many of those boardrooms are virtual right now), retailers are fighting to keep their businesses legally safe: NACS is leading a call for legislation to protect essential businesses from staying-open-in-the-pandemic liability lawsuits. Kevin Smartt, NACS Treasurer and CEO of Texas Born, testified to Congressional Committee members, "While it's extremely difficult to prove where COVID-19 was contracted, we know that some plaintiffs' attorneys will look to take advantage of the crisis and file claims against businesses who stayed open."²

This pandemic has taught us that we were not as prepared as we thought, but this is not the time to quit. We are on the front lines as essential businesses, and we must hold the line to keep everyone safe. There is an opportunity now to think and talk together about how we can do things better.

Join us in the conversation.
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and be a part of the solution.



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¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic-resources/1918-commemoration/pandemic-timeline-1918.htm>

² https://www.convenience.org/Media/Daily/2020/May/13/1-NACS-Treasurer-Testifies-Before-US-Senate_GR