A Guide to Reopening and Rebuilding your Vending Business Safely and Successfully while Adjusting to the New Normal

April 2020
As you are working through these difficult times and looking towards rebuilding your business when the nation “opens up” - we are here to support you.

Our goal is to provide you with solid information in a clear format that is easy to understand and put into action.

We want you to emerge stronger than ever while adjusting to the new normal.

“Through our unique food distribution system, our industry can be the greatest source of “contactless” nourishment to over 40 million consumers with food and beverage daily, and it is all accomplished in an unattended retail environment - often with round the clock availability.”

- NAMA
1. Shutdown Planning Phase

Most of the country is still in this phase - you are not alone.

This is the time to plan and prepare -- organize, evaluate, modify operations, order supplies, define procedures, communicate with both employees and customers.
Employees

Communicate. You should be engaging with your employees - both the ones working and those that were furloughed.
- Ascertain each individual’s situation - how many will return?
- Communicate your goals/plans
- Honor the work employees are doing to help sustain your business
- Make assurances for employee safety when work resumes
- Advise of new procedures/operational changes/etc.
- If needed, assure furloughed employees that you will try to get them back to work as soon you can generate the revenue to sustain additional salaries
- Explore options & make plans if you think you will be understaffed (with some past employees not returning)
**Customers**

**Communicate. Stay connected in whatever way possible. Call. Email. Show you are invested in making their return to business successful and safe.**

- Ask about their plans to resume business (this will help you with your planning of staff, product, routes, etc.)
- Assure them of your safety plans - explain key points regarding sanitizing machines and other safety precautions
- If needed - take this opportunity to transition them to cashless and/or contactless vending machines (which can also result in increased sales of 26% in general)
- Set expectations - regarding the time it will take to get machines sanitized, any product procurement issues, etc.
Planning

You will feel better with a solid plan. Start with accepting that there is a new normal. Realize that even with the best plan, you will need to be flexible and will have to adapt to changing situations on a daily basis.

Considerations:
- Order enough PPE for employees -- masks, gloves, hand sanitizers, etc. (you may find that these are available through your supply channels, such as Vistar)
- Order sanitizing products for machines and micro-markets and OCS (don’t forget filters)
- Gage employee situation - will you have enough? Will you need to hire, and if so, what about training and security clearances? Make appropriate plans
- Analyze logistics:
  - forecast when facilities will open, will they be partial openings (only certain buildings or floors, areas may be inaccessible), how many machines involved?
  - determine new routes, based on the schedule of openings and when service will be resumed, your scope of work to sanitize, your available staff, etc.
Look into:

- **Product Availability Issues**
  Check with your local distributor about product availability and ask about possible substitutions (note: this may create a need for revised planograms)

- **Product Expirations**
  Be aware of expiration dates on your own inventory and that of what you will be receiving from distributors - another new normal that will be with us for some time

- **Plan/Make Adjustments**
  Be upfront with customers about any product issues and let them know you have a plan; Also, customers may wish to change to plastic bottles versus soda CANS that have exposed flip tops which are less sanitary for drinking

Be aware of and plan for...

**Potential Product Issues**
HYDRATION is more important than ever… which means bottled water can and should be the product of the moment

- The importance of proper hydration can’t be overstated as we face the challenge of COVID-19.
- The immune system is ENHANCED by proper hydration and COMPROMISED by dehydration.
- Hydration is even more important if you become sick, as illness tends to dehydrate the body.
- If you are under-hydrated, the ability of the body to fight illness is greatly reduced.

Enhanced waters -- offer health & nutritional benefits! The proper balance of water and electrolytes in the body determines how well our systems function. Electrolytes work to power nerves & muscles, maintain the blood’s pH and balance fluids -- keeping the body healthy and working at an optimal level.

Demand for bottled water has increased significantly. Can you be providing water to office, home, and/or retail customers? Answering consumer demand and increasing sales = Win/Win
Time for some Innovative Thinking...

Vending PPE:
Most traditional vending machines should be able to vend:
- Small Hand Sanitizers
- Pre-packaged set of Disposable Gloves
- Pre-packaged Disposable Mask

Micro-market Strategy:
Consider adding home essential items to your market coolers, enabling consumers to avoid a pit-stop on their way home from work. Now, more than ever, limiting visits to stores and more contact with people is an important convenience.

Items like: milk, eggs, butter, cream cheese, OJ, etc.
If your critical planning is completed...

Consider spending time on:

**Updating your training process:**
- This will be especially helpful to start strong if you will be hiring new and inexperienced staff
- *Incorporate new safety protocols*

**Reviewing your marketing strategies**

**Researching new business opportunities**

**Analyzing data for internal use - and to boost customer sales**
2. **Reopening Rebuilding Phase**

This is the time to focus on goals.
Be flexible.
Remain adaptive.
Employees

**Educate. Communicate. Be supportive.**
- Explain new safety protocols (hygiene, uniforms, etc.)
- Describe protective gear - gloves, masks, etc. and their usage
- Discuss protective behaviors (cough etiquette, etc.)
- Explain symptom assessment (COVID-19) if they become sick
- Explain your sick policy (consider flexing it to discourage sick employees from coming to work)
- Maintain confidentiality/privacy/sensitivity (as possible) with sick employees
- Fully train on all new sanitizing procedures and any new protocols
- Understand employee concerns / Answer their questions
- Communicate the company goals and the expected responsibilities of each team member

Once work resumes under the new normal - keep a positive calm attitude with employees. Keep them focused on doing their best - encouraging them to be flexible and to manage the day to day changes that will no doubt occur unpredictably.
Your Customers

Communicate with them.
Reassure them.
Update them on your plans as needed.

Vending patrons will need reassurance as well...

**Signage** should be placed on machines and in micro-markets to indicate that enhanced safety measures are in place and purchases can be made with peace of mind.
Vendors with Gym Accounts

Gyms are part of the Government’s Phase One Reopening Plan. Many experts question if this can be done safely when just emerging from “stay at home” measures. While gyms are an integral part of many American’s lives, they can become vectors for the virus - just as outbreaks might otherwise be winding down.

Be aware that gyms may have specific directives:
- limited times of opening (with intervals of closing for cleaning within a single day)
- less usage by members who are reluctant to return to the gym at this point

You will need to plan around their open times, and carefully track vending usage as it will be very different than past patterns.
3. Best Practices

Industry specific protocols must be followed for the safety of your employees and that of your vending customers.
“Cleaned, Filled and Working”
Just took on a whole new meaning

Ok, so you finally have access to your machines, markets & OCS.

**What next:**
- Expired product has to be purged
- Machines need to be sanitized - at a whole new level
- New product needs to be filled
- For micro-markets and coffee service, there are even more surfaces and items to clean and sanitize
- New signage and instructions may need to be placed

And “cleaned” now has to mean SANITIZED.
Know the difference.
Vending Machines

While offering less chance of product contamination due to a closed setting, there are still necessary precautions.

All components on vending equipment, including electronics, keypads, plastic surfaces and glass surfaces, can be cleaned easily and effectively.

Commercial grade cleaning and disinfectant options are highly effective for this process. Be sure they are:

- EPA approved against SARS-CoV-2 (the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19)
- have not expired
- are used according to directions
- appropriate for the desired usage

**Recommended Supplies:**

- disposable non-linting cloths (contact, non-contact & external)
- spray bottle with cleaning solution -
  - To kill the virus, surfaces must stay wet with cleaning product for the entire time on the cleaning product’s label (look for “contact time” or “dwell time” on the label).
- Glass Cleaner
- Clean disposable gloves

**Important Notes:**

- Be sure the machine is OFF before completing any cleaning
- Do not apply spray cleaner directly onto surfaces that could leak directly onto electrical components such as keypads or touchscreens. Apply to clean cloth then wipe the surface.
Micro-markets & OCS Areas

Represent greater concern because items can easily be handled by multiple people in short periods of time.

There are many high touch areas:

- touch screen kiosk
- handles on coolers
- product in coolers (plastic bottles, plastic clamshells with food items)
- coffee machines - various parts like levers, buttons, etc.
- countertops
- utensil/condiment dispensers

TIPS:

- wrap fresh produce items (apples, bananas, etc.) or consider not offering right now
- do not allow personal reusable coffee cups; encourage 1x use paper cups
- Kiosk screens can be cleaned with a 1:1 solution of water and isopropyl alcohol on a microfiber cloth - spray solution on cloth not screen.
Equipment
that requires special attention

Certain equipment will require flushing of lines and holding tanks, sanitizing and filter replacements. When systems have been sitting without use, there is potential for microbiological growth so this is a critical step in bringing equipment back in use safely.

- Install new filter and flush according to guidelines
- Perform a sanitization cycle for all machines
- POU / Bevi / Smartwell / ION -- change filter and UV
- Kegerator: flush and sanitize lines and tap
- Bean-to-Cup Brewers: remove open/unsealed product
- Ice Machine PM (and filter)
An investment for your high volume Micro-market Accounts...

Self-standing (foaming) Hand Sanitizer Dispenser
Links to resources:

**US Dept. of Labor**
www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/

**US EPA**
www.epa.gov/coronavirus
www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2

bottledwater.org/COVID-19-information-resources/helpful-resources

digitalsignagetoday.com/blogs/how-to-keep-your-touchscreen-germ-free/
You are not alone.

RSA Management Group is here to support you and provide assistance as you modify your operations and procedures to keep your employees and customers safe.

We want to help position your business to recover strongly and successfully.

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