

COVID-19: RE-OPENING COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST - UPDATE 2

May 2020

Situation

Consumers will want to return to the shops and spend time, and money, with family and friends but in a safe environment – we now know this could be from 1 June 2020.

It is hard to predict whether footfall will reach pre Covid-19 levels but shopping destinations need to create a welcoming experience for all those who return over the coming weeks and months. Occupiers need sales but in a controlled and safe environment.

There will be mixture of emotions, including fear and concerns regarding personal safety competing with the desire to be released from lockdown restrictions. This may vary by age and demographic.

In Centre

Occupiers will look to Centre Management for clear and confident communication to protect shoppers and occupiers alike. Mall teams will be at the forefront of occupier and shopper contact and questions.

Centre Teams must be fully briefed and able to explain all steps being taken to reopen safely and in accordance with Government instructions which are now widely available.

It is important to build trust with accurate and helpful information so there may be a need to repeat and develop messages. The provision of more cleaning products and wearing face coverings will be required.

Tenants must have carried out their own COVID-19 risk assessment and ensure they have in place cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with guidance. They will also need to have taken reasonable steps to maintain a 2m distance in the workplace and where people cannot be 2m apart, have done everything practical to manage transmission risk. It is anticipated that a level of social distancing of 2m will be in place for an unspecified period.

How, where and when to communicate?

Ensure that the occupiers are clear regarding opening arrangements before consumer announcements are made public. Ensure any changes to entrances, exits and queue management are clearly communicated. Shopping centres should take responsibility for regulating the number of customers in the centre and the queuing process in communal areas and consider outside premises for queuing where available and safe. This needs to be conveyed to customers to manage expectations.

Understand and be able to amplify occupier/tenant policies regarding hygiene and distancing. Customers will be encouraged to shop alone where possible. Tenants will need to consider whether fitting rooms should be open and if they are, how they will be cleaned. Create procedures to manage clothes that have been tried on, for example delaying their return to the shop floor and limiting contact between customers and colleagues during fittings should be considered.

To reduce transmission through contact with objects in the store, tenants should consider limiting customer handling of merchandise through different display methods, new signage or rotation of high-touch stock. Tenants could put in place picking-up and dropping-off collection points. Enforcing contactless refunds and staggered collection times and keeping refunds separate to displayed merchandise would also be sensible.

Centres will need to reduce maximum occupancy for lifts, providing hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts and encouraging use of stairs wherever possible. Regulating the use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts, turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing will be key.

In advance – social media channels and website; local media channels (on-line and printed). Radio if local provided as public service information. Provide adequate notice for opening to avoid last minute confusion or unwanted congestion.

When open – information to be in centre through posters, digital screens, door decals, lift lobbies, pedestrian and car park entrances, existing notice boards, information desks and management office. Regularly update digital and social channels. Make it obvious information is updated regularly.

Provide clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival and provide written or spoken communication of the latest guidelines to both workers and customers inside and outside the store and in selling and non-selling areas. Hand sanitiser should be made available throughout the centre (not just washrooms) and centres need to set out clear guidance for cleaning processes in toilets.

Consider staff presence on the malls – clearly identifiable as ‘here to help’. Consider ‘hygiene and distancing’ ambassadors. If appropriate provide printed information easily collected from dispensers by individual – not handed out.

Collate agreed and checked statements that comply with any Govt/NHS/Council advice. Provide information on opening hours, reduced level of stores open, restrictions on cafes, restaurants or leisure facilities. Explain access points and car parking arrangements, use of public toilets and click & collect arrangements. Clarify any reduced/free parking arrangements for key workers. Confirm if parking costs have changed – will payments machines be card only and constantly cleaned?

Collate and distribute FAQ’s on health and safety advice to all centre staff for consistency.

Personalise the information to the centre to ensure local accuracy and authenticity. Consider a high impact but consistent creative route to engage shoppers quickly and effectively. The re-opening process is a first of this kind of exercise and needs to have stand out from previous management or statutory signage.

Cascade internal information carefully and prioritise centre staff, occupiers, shoppers, third parties (Council/BIDs) and media. Emphasis the need to maintain social distancing throughout the centre.

Back of house or customer service points

To maintain social distancing between individuals when they are at their workstations, centres and tenants will need to consider reviewing layouts to allow workers to work further apart from each other. Avoid people working face-to-face, for example, by working side-by-side or facing away from each other or using screens to create a physical barrier between people and considering using contactless payments will be imperative. Suspend gift card sales if not confident of systems.

Consider who is essential to be on the premises; for example, back of house workers should work from home if possible. Planning for the minimum number of people needed on site to operate safely and effectively. Reviewing layouts to allow workers to work further apart from each other.

Reduce movement by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings or sites, for instance restricting access to some areas and encouraging use of radios or telephones. Provide centre staff with means to communicate all safety and hygiene steps being taken. Visible posters/decals/how to access to websites/signage/management offices.

Content and tone of voice tailored to audiences. Practical and confident whilst welcoming and authoritative. It will be essential to build trust and empathy with shoppers.

This list is by no means exhaustive and the situation changes daily. Check all credible sources regularly for updates and create easy to use templates to minimise costs and resources.

Audience	Content	Timing
Centre staff	All practical instructions and information to convey clear and confident message. Briefings, communications collateral, web / social links / accessible issues / FAQs on cleaning and hygiene routines. Own personal safety measures including use of radios, phones, keys, PCs, security key pads.	Allow sufficient time to bring staff up to date on new procedures and make familiar with all shopper and occupier messaging. Weekly or regular updates as phased opening becomes clearer. Ensure furloughed staff are briefed on return.
Occupiers	Health & Safety / systems and processes to reactivate building / occupier FAQs / fire testing etc / copies of any shopper communications / ask for cleaning regime information to share / hold small group briefings. Confirm method of updating as may have to be immediate.	Provide details as far as possible before an opening date including a briefing on what shoppers are being provided with. Explain any marketing or comms initiatives to support their businesses. Update all database contacts.
Customers/Shoppers	In centre/POS/posters and digital screens / floor & door decals/ car park/lift lobbies/car park tickets. A clear ‘Welcome Back’ message backed by practical information.	Use full range of channels – digital, print and broadcast. Not expecting to spend any media budget for this stage as more informative and confidence building information. Plan ahead with key messages over 2/3 weeks
Third Parties (BID, Council)	Seek collaboration with all groups to accommodate any town wide information. Focus on physical benefits of shopping and supporting local businesses.	Manage own communications and messaging first for occupiers and shoppers then involve third parties when critical mass of town business becomes beneficial.
Media	Accurate details of all steps being taken to reopen safely. Create media releases with Centre Management quotes for key points. Manage the expectations of those excited to return. Be clear this is a phased approach. Seek endorsement through joint release/comments from Council, BID or anchor stores.	Ensure media has timely warning of reopening and the detail – avoid criticism by keeping away over-zealous ‘opening’ statements and keep all comms factual and helpful. Use the media to amplify positive and authoritative messages. Offer feedback and follow up on shopper reactions and successes.

Centres will have their own methods of cascading information as well as a range of in centre opportunities or points of sale where information can be prominently displayed. The key is consistency of message.

Shoppers need to be reassured that shopping destinations are giving them timely and accurate information to make their return to the retail environment enjoyable and safe.

Provide sources of further information such as REVO, NHS, Government web sites and Retail Trust for occupiers and staff.



Produced for REVO by AL Marketing Communications May 2020. www.almarketing.com
Updated 18 May 2020.