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VOLUME # 2

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## SAFE EXHIBITING GUIDE



October 2021

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**M**ore than 18 months after trade shows and in-person events began being cancelled and/or postponed due to COVID-19, I'm happy to report that the wide-scale return to live events is imminent. Don't believe me? Let's take a look at the data from EXHIBITOR magazine's most recent EXHIBITOR*Insight* white paper.

First, the majority of exhibiting companies (68 percent) plan to resume participating in live trade shows by the end of this year's third quarter — and 86 percent of corporate exhibit managers expect to return to in-person events by the end of this year. What's more, the average exhibiting company predicts it will participate in 21 live events this year (including at least 10 in-person trade shows and hybrid events at which it plans to have a physical presence).

Perhaps more significantly, as recently as six months ago, only 51 percent of corporate exhibit and event managers said they felt at least somewhat comfortable with the idea of attending in-person events. Since then, that number has risen to 69 percent, meaning a slight majority of marketers are now at least "somewhat comfortable" (34 percent) or "very comfortable" (35 percent) getting back onto trade show floors.

And that comfort level is likely to continue inching upward, as at least six in 10 respondents said mandatory mask wearing and social distancing, enhanced cleaning and sanitization measures, and new or improved air filtration systems at event venues would make them feel even better about attending an in-person trade show. Given the fact that most major venues have already instituted some, if not all, of those protocols, it's safe to say that more and more marketers will feel confident emerging from pandemic purgatory and returning to show floors as soon as possible.

So face-to-face marketing is coming back. But that good news presents an entirely new and different challenge: how to safely exhibit in a world where COVID-19 still exists — and still poses a threat to both the health and livelihoods of many individuals. To understand what steps face-to-face marketers can take to make their exhibits as safe as possible, EXHIBITOR compiled research from the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control while also reaching out to representatives from the International Association of Exhibitions and Events and

the Global Biorisk Advisory Council, as well as experts in experiential design, public health, venue management, and more. And while some of their recommendations may not apply to your program, they provide a solid primer on safe exhibiting practices, including tips related to staffing, design, giveaways, cleaning procedures, and more.

Whether you're looking to reconfigure your exhibit to accommodate social distancing, develop an in-booth cleaning protocol, prep your team, or anything in between, you'll find sound advice within this guide. And if you read nothing else, check out "Safe Exhibiting Practices" on page

4 for a checklist of things to consider before your next conference.

I know there's a temptation (especially for those of us who are fully vaccinated and eager for normalcy) to want to crumple up these tips and toss them in the circular file. Believe me, I get it. But if your next trade show ends up on the news as a superspreader event, it's going to set the entire industry back and could very well cause some states and cities to ban mass gatherings once again. Plus, the vast majority of these tips are both simple and relatively inexpensive to implement.

When it comes to COVID-19, sadly there is no silver-bullet strategy. These tips are designed to deliver

what I like to think of as a Swiss Cheese Approach. If you take one slice of Swiss, there are going to be lots of holes and air bubbles in it. But if you layer a bunch of slices together — like how you can and should layer several of the recommendations contained within this guide — you eventually plug all the holes or, in this case, make your spaces as safe as realistically possible. So think through each tip, and adopt and adapt as many as you can. Do your part to help prove that trade shows and in-person events can be held safely and successfully, even during a pandemic. ■

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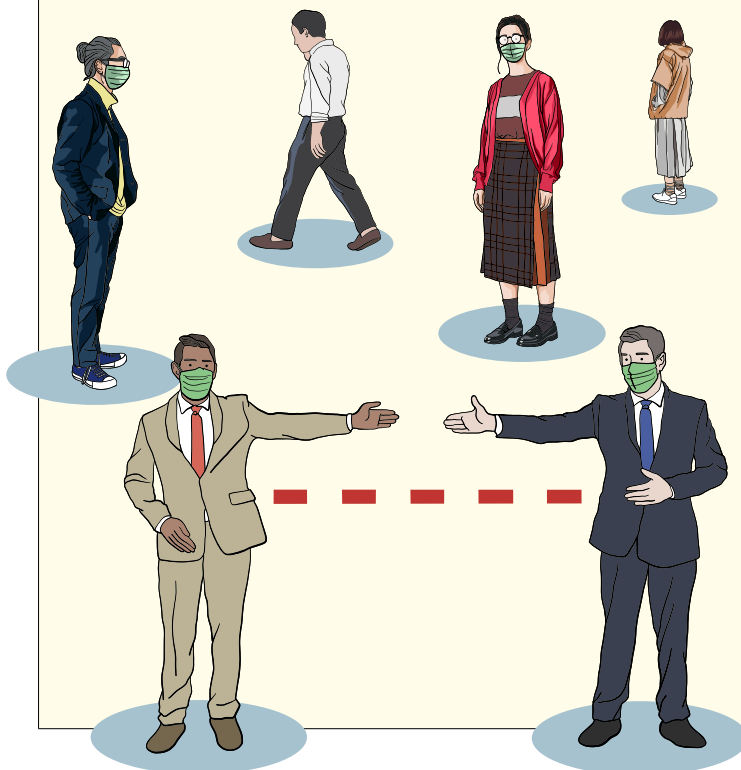


Travis Stanton, editor; [tstanton@exhibitor magazine.com](mailto:tstanton@exhibitor magazine.com)

# SAFE EXHIBITING PRACTICES:

# 12 Considerations to Keep Your Booth as Safe and Successful as Possible

When in-person trade shows return in earnest, everyone must play their part to ensure the industry remains open. And in many respects, exhibitors will be on the front lines of minimizing the spread of COVID-19 via their exhibit designs and in-booth precautions. But what will those new exhibit design and practices look like? We asked designers, venue managers, show organizers, and health experts for design tips and protocols that face-to-face marketers can readily implement. While program managers should always review the provisions in place for each event, venue, and locale, the sources we spoke with offered the following general best practices. *By Ben Barclay and Charles Pappas*



## 1. Physical Distancing

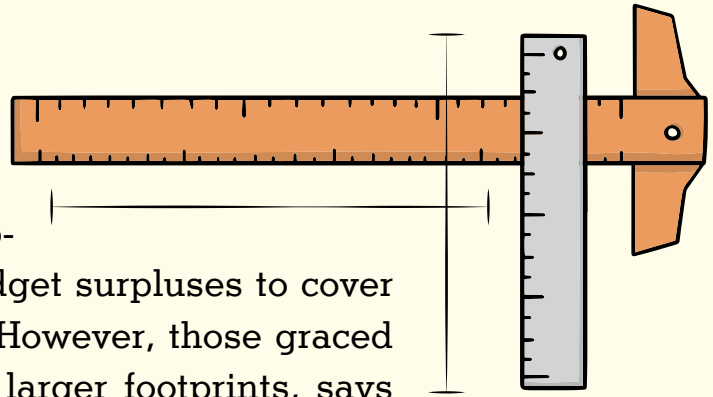
One of the surest ways to maintain in-booth safety for visitors and staff alike is to adhere to what is known as the Crowd Density Standard (CDS). Devised by the International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM), the CDS sets a limit on how many people can safely inhabit an area using the following formula: Divide the total amount of space available by 28. (The number 28 refers to the amount of socially distant square footage each person needs to maintain in order to have 6 feet of distance in all directions.) In a 10-by-10-foot exhibit (measuring 100 square feet), the formula indicates 3.5 people — including staffers — can safely occupy it. Since you cannot round up and maintain the recommended distance, you must round down to three people. Following the same formula, a 10-by-20-foot exhibit will hold seven people, a 20-by-20-foot space can have 14 bodies, a 20-by-40-foot enclosure can contain 28 people, etc.

## 2 Booth Size

To maximize the number of visitors inside your stand, invest in a bigger footprint when possible.

Of course, not many trade show programs are currently experiencing budget surpluses to cover the added expense of larger spaces. However, those graced with flush war chests are opting for larger footprints, says

John Capano, senior vice president of client development at Impact XM, who estimates about half of Impact XM's clients are trying to go that route. The other half that are maintaining their historical square footage must make the most of the space they have. First and foremost, that means clearing the area of anything that's not mission critical to their objectives. For example, this might include minimizing the number of products in the physical stand and moving some to a digital/hybrid component.



## 3

### Traffic Flow

Consider establishing controlled entrance and exit points to create a one-way flow of booth traffic, says Dasher Lowe, executive director of the Experiential Designers and Producers Association (EDPA), citing guidelines for the International Association of Exhibitions and Events' (IAEE) "Essential Considerations for Safely Reopening Exhibitions and Events." Perimeter barriers will help limit access and channel visitors to the entrance. This can be easily done with in-lines by orienting entrances and exits with the directional flow of the one-way aisles expected at some shows. Island booths have more flexibility, but the goal is to keep visitors moving in the same direction.

# 4

## Graphics and Floor Markers

To help keep attendees the crucial minimum of 6 feet apart, Adriano Almeida, Kubik Inc.'s head of creative services and strategy, and Jennifer Sanders, marketing director of 2020 Exhibits Inc., recommend anything from simple vinyl floor graphics to carpet inlays that blend into your booth colors while still denoting where people should stand relative to one another. Evelyn Wuest, manager of venue innovation at the Vancouver Convention Centre, also recommends using signage to indicate the maximum occupancy of your booth space.



# 6

## Exterior Design

Previously, some exhibitors positioned their most enticing offerings deeper inside their spaces to lure in attendees. But for the time being, marketers would be better served

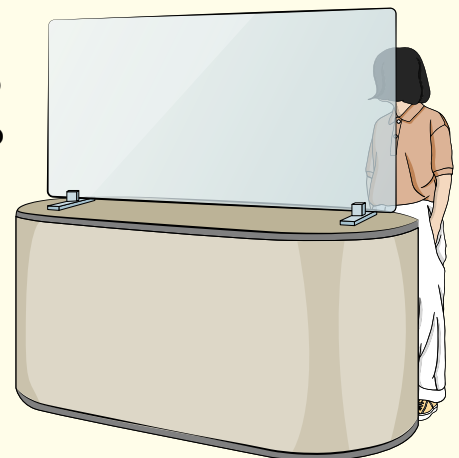
by considering the opposite, several experts suggest. Place product displays near the perimeter — or, in the case of smaller in-line booths, move displays and

monitors that might have previously resided on your back wall closer to the aisles. This will enable those unwilling to enter your space to still experience your offerings

while simultaneously keeping window shoppers in the aisles and leaving the inner space available for serious customers that are seeking more intimate conversations.

# 5 Safety Partitions

Where staff and attendees cannot remain 6 feet apart — e.g., reception desks, counters, demo stations, theater seating, and hospitality bars — IAEE recommends installing dividers. As a rule of thumb, Amy Gattoni, manager for strategy and insights at Access TCA Inc., suggests that dividers reach an additional 2.5 to 3 feet above the surface of a 4-foot-tall counter or tabletop.





## 7

### Booth Staffing

Because of travel uncertainty, program managers should adjust staffing practices. “Brands often fly in their favorite ambassadors to the show city,” Capano says. “That’s not going to be happening as much with ongoing travel restrictions.” Experts recommend relying on local talent when possible and limiting in-booth personnel. Also, consider creating rotating pods of staffers that always work together to limit potential exposure to isolated working groups. That way, if someone happens to test positive at the show, you can quarantine that individual’s working group rather than your entire team.

## 8

### Materials and Cleaning

In addition to robust disinfections before and after each day of the show, exhibitors will want to frequently decontaminate high-touch surfaces such as kiosks, tables, and chairs throughout the event. To make the process easier and more efficient, carefully consider the stand’s materials and finishes. When possible, opt for hard, nonporous finishes. “Surfaces such as laminates, Sintra, rolled vinyl floors, and nonfabric seating will be easiest to maintain on a frequent basis,” says Jennifer Bly, director of account management for Jack Morton Worldwide Inc. No matter what program managers opt for in their booths — wood, fabric, vinyl, or metal — IAEE’s white paper suggests using approved systems for decontaminating them, such as electrostatic sprayers and High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) vacuums. There are hundreds of cleaners that have been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that are effective against COVID-19. But Dr. Brian Labus, an assistant professor in the department of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas’ School of Public Health, warns that most of these are generally not effective when they are sprayed on and immediately wiped off. “Be sure the sterilizing agents remain on the surface for the minimum amount of time indicated on the cleanser’s directions,” Labus says. And don’t be discreet when it comes to disinfecting your space. Recent surveys by the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) indicate that attendees like to see the process taking place as it reassures them sanitization is being taken seriously.







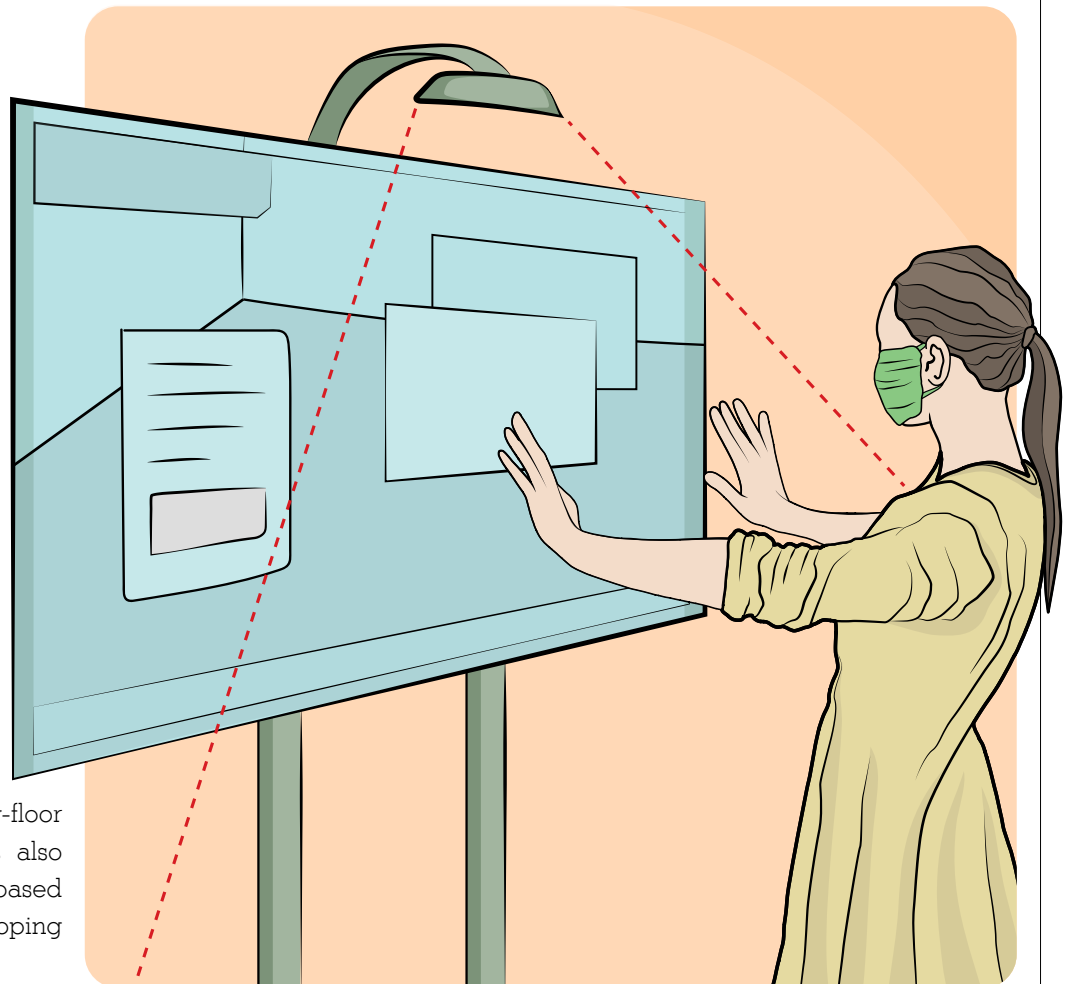
## 9

### Sanitizing Stations

One nearly obligatory feature of the exhibition industry's "new normal" is the hand-sanitizer station. "While there is no one standard for how many stations there should be in a given space," Gattoni says, "it is recommended to place three of them per 100 square feet." (That's roughly parallel to the number of people that would be allowed in a booth of that size, according to the IAVM.) Have plenty of sanitizing solution on hand, including enough stored inside the exhibit to refill dispensers.

## 10 Touchless Tech

"Virtual reality delivered through headsets is going to be a tough sell for the foreseeable future," Capano says. "There was always a bit of a hygiene issue before — now it's obviously worse." Augmented reality, on the other hand, is going to see a surge. But don't expect exhibit managers to be lugging carts of tablet PCs to shows for visitors to pass around. Rather, craft AR experiences so that attendees can use their own mobile devices. That will not only make them feel safer engaging with the activation, but also prevent you from spending precious show-floor time sterilizing iPads. Experts also expect to see more gesture-based and voice-controlled tech popping up on trade show floors.



# 11

## In-Booth Seating

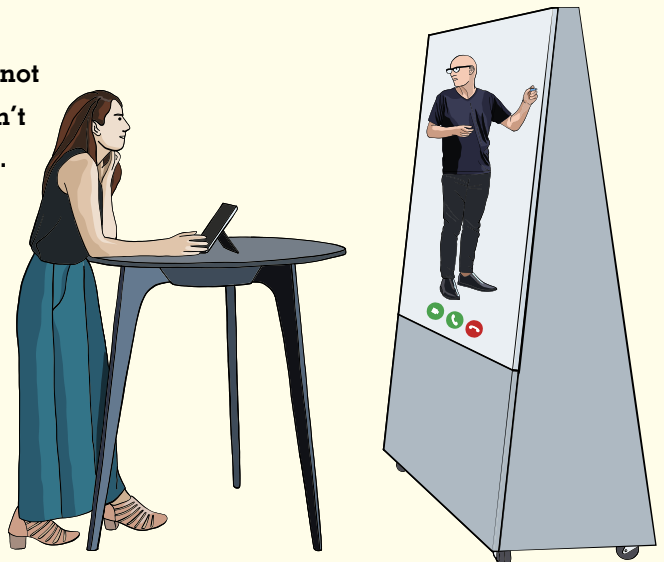
Seating for a 100- or 200-square-foot booth doesn't have to vanish — just be modified. "Design seating vignettes that offer at least 10 to 12 feet between each other," counsels Lilian Shen, director of marketing for Cort Events, a subsidiary of Cort Business Services Corp. For single seats, she advocates pairing each one with an individual side or end table to reduce shared surfaces.

To subtly discourage sitting and talking at length — which could increase transmission risk and delay other attendees from entering the booth — Cynthia Sharpe, principal for cultural attractions and research at Thinkwell Group Inc., suggests installing sleek plastic or vinyl chairs in your company colors. "While not uncomfortable," she says, "they encourage sitting and talking for an extended period less than more traditionally cushy seats." As a bonus, plastic or vinyl can be easily and quickly wiped cleaned.



## 12. Hybrid Solutions

Due to corporate and/or international travel restrictions, not everyone can attend trade shows, and some simply aren't comfortable rubbing elbows — even at a 6-foot distance. That means trade show managers would be wise to adopt hybrid solutions ranging from a separate digital experience to video meetings with in-booth staffers. Whatever the resolution, managers should construct both a physical and virtual presence whenever possible, even if that digital department is little more than a show-specific microsite with info on the products in the physical exhibit, a few general marketing videos, and links to chat live with a sales rep or schedule an appointment.



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## Modeling Safety Protocols

Unfortunately, there's no instruction manual for COVID-friendly stand design. So EXHIBITOR tapped a handful of experts for some redesign ideas to help your stand maintain its effectiveness while meeting the rigors of our radical new reality. *By Linda Armstrong*

**P**rior to the pandemic, sales and marketing objectives — along with attendee needs and preferences — drove booth designs almost exclusively. But the current prime directives also include the welfare of visitors and staff and the COVID-19 precautions enacted by show management and/or your company's safety standards. In a sense, designing an exhibit today is a whole different animal than it was a mere 18 months ago.

Taming this beast involves multiple additions and adaptations, such as integrating sanitizing tactics, designing for social distancing, eliminating high-touch components, and more. Unfortunately, there's no hard-and-fast guide for any of it. Granted, in June 2020, the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) recommended an optimum floor density of 28 square feet per person (based on a 6-foot radius around individuals). But

aside from this counsel, which may border on outdated, most exhibitors haven't been privy to a single best-practice example or received any "what goes where" advice.

To help you consider where and how to implement safety precautions and to aid you in visualizing just what this new normal looks like, EXHIBITOR spoke with a host of marketers and designers that are already domesticating this strange new creature. Erick Gustafson, design director at Access TCA Inc., then married our experts' advice with some of his own and devised "Before" and "After" renderings for two hypothetical exhibit configurations (a 10-by-20-foot in-line and a 50-by-60-foot island). While the ideas and layouts presented here may not suit every situation, they can help you begin to envision how to redesign your own environs to ensure your stand is both safe and effective.

# 50-by-60-foot Island

**AFTER**

Offering specific entrance and exit points, the COVID-friendly design also provides sufficient room for social distancing, myriad sanitization elements, and various graphics explaining attendee expectations and ongoing health-and-safety practices.

“If the utmost privacy is a critical concern,” says Stephen Ross, vice president and executive creative director at Access TCA, “you can adapt a conference-room space to include various safety precautions and limit the number of occupants.” Gustafson’s design has a ceiling with a built-in air-filtration system and Plexiglas dividers integrated into the table.



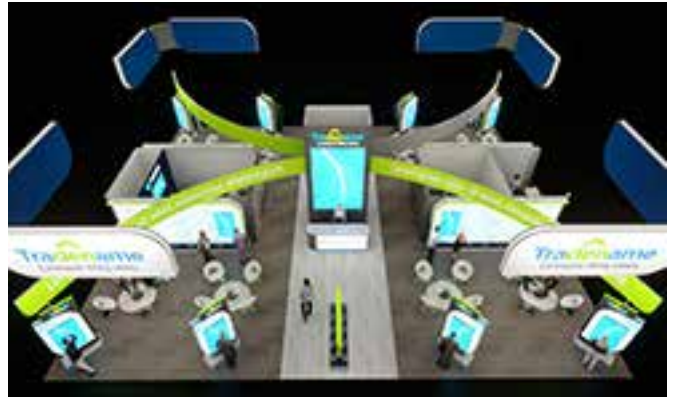
“Make sure signage and monitors communicate who you are and what you offer and that messaging is large enough to be easily consumed by passersby,” Gustafson says. This design employs a large central ID tower playing capabilities presentations as well as product-demo stations located near the aisle.

Given the IAEE’s recommendations regarding occupant density, think about implementing clear entrance and exit points for your stand. “To that end,” Gustafson says, “one option is to erect low planters or subtle barriers that establish a perimeter and direct traffic toward entrances.”

“Position battery-operated hand-sanitizing stations near any hands-on activity areas (e.g., product displays, touchscreens, conference environments, etc.) and at exhibit entrance and exit points,” says Tara Ericson, CEO at beMatrix USA.

## BEFORE

The prepandemic design features an open floor plan with free-flowing traffic throughout, along with a range of lounge/discussion areas and a maximum-capacity conference room.



Todd Dailey, vice president of creative at Visual Communications, recommends that you reduce lounge furniture and opt for more informal tables and chairs. Multiple furniture groupings in the “before” iteration are reduced to one sit-down discussion area on the back side of the central ID tower.

“Don’t forget to factor in room for sanitization supplies and disposal,” says Courtney Cantor, marketing director at Hamilton Exhibits LLC. “Many attendees will likely be thrilled to see a caddy with cleaning provisions.”

Floor graphics, such as the circles and arrows in this design, can serve a dual purpose. “They can remind people to social distance and can direct traffic into and out of your space, but they can also highlight key areas to consume content,” says Martha Barnard, product marketing manager at The Freeman Co. LLC (Freeman).

“To ensure attendees know what to expect in your footprint, post your and/or the show’s guidelines and expectations on the corners of your space or on hand-sanitizing stations at the booth entrance,” Cantor says. “And to fully leverage this signage, Gustafson suggests it include a Quick Response (QR) code that leads to a preview of booth content. If any passersby are wary of entering but are still curious, they can ‘snack’ on info in the aisle.”

“Consider implementing Plexiglas to shield people from airborne droplets,” says Ross. This design features Plexi ‘wings’ on the edges of two-sided kiosks and between all interactive assets.

# 10-by-20-foot In-line

## AFTER

Many of the aforementioned accommodations for island exhibits — such as floor graphics, hand-sanitizing stations, and high-visibility messaging — are apropos for in-line exhibits as well. But here’s how these tactics and a couple of others specifically apply to linear spaces.

“Your booth outline is no barrier to airborne droplets,” Ericson says. “If your in-line booth butts up to a neighboring footprint, employ a wall, half wall, or Plexiglas divider between the spaces to maintain social distancing and keep droplets out of your air space.”

To limit direct contact with a display, Gustafson switched out a touchscreen interactive with a screen featuring gesture-based technology.

The small type next to the kiosk in the “before” design is removed and text and images are enlarged so passersby can view them from the aisle.



The exhibitor has a demo counter at the front of the space, and many conversations will occur at this locale, Gustafson says. So the design incorporates a Plexiglas shield between staff and attendees.

A simple floor-based decal offers a “Please Stand Here” message that also serves as a reminder to maintain social distance.

“Along with posting booth and show sanitization guidelines, consider displaying info about your own safety precautions,” Cantor says. “Some attendees absolutely want to know.”



## BEFORE

The “before” design offers traditional touchscreen technology, tiny text at the interactive kiosk, and a face-to-face interaction point at the front of the space.



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# ASKED AND ANSWERED

One of the challenges as events reopen is that venues and shows are certain to have new guidelines and rules that may not be explicitly spelled out in the exhibitor manual. Amy Gattoni, manager for strategies and insights at Access TCA Inc., suggests program managers ask their show reps the following nine questions to better understand the lay of the land.

## QUESTION 1

### Is the venue GBAC certified?

Most key venues and many vendors have completed the GBAC STAR certification or a similar accreditation, which indicate how thoroughly and seriously the venue has prepared for reopening. This piece of information may help you make a stronger case to managers and internal stakeholders that multiple safeguards are already in place to reduce the spread of contagions.

## QUESTION 2

### Can you share your health and safety plan?

These documents should include outbreak plans, health and safety guidelines, enforcement plans, signage examples, and a resource guide. If show management does not have such documents, ask if the venue has them. In the event neither has a plan, consider establishing your own that details how your company will respond to various scenarios.

## QUESTION 3

### What cleaning protocols and schedule will be enacted in the exhibit hall each day?

Some shows will close the hall for a few hours to conduct cleaning beyond what typically happened before COVID. Many of these cleaning methods require that no people be in the vicinity during and for a few hours after. This will be important for exhibitors to know as they may be unable to access their exhibits during that time. Also, there should be a cleaning schedule during show hours.

## QUESTION 4

### What cleaning measures are exhibitors responsible for?

This should be limited to cleaning their own properties and high-touch surfaces such as counters, touchscreens, and kiosks. But it's important to clarify that show management is not putting more on exhibitors than is reasonable. It's also important to understand what additional tasks you may need staffers to perform so that you can train them appropriately.

#### QUESTION 5

## What other health and safety responsibilities will fall to exhibitors?

Will program managers be responsible for their own staff's contact tracing, staff compliance, and policies? In truth, it should be minimal. But it's essential you understand — and convey to your reps — any responsibilities that might apply to you and your team.

#### QUESTION 6

## Will show management require that attendees be vaccinated?

Show organizers are allowed to require proof of vaccination to attend their expos. It is not a violation of health-care privacy laws to ask if someone has been vaccinated as long as 1) the individual asking is not a medical professional and therefore the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) does not apply, and 2) no records or recording of attendees' vaccination status are kept (because it would then qualify as a medical record and HIPAA would apply). Having said that, individual exhibitors probably shouldn't query booth visitors on their vaccination status.

#### QUESTION 8

## How has the structure, type, and cost of cleaning changed since exhibiting in early 2020?

Cleaning and sanitization efforts will likely include more than vacuuming and porter service. It's important to understand if show management is incurring additional cleaning costs and how much of that will be put back on exhibitor.

#### QUESTION 7

## Who is liable if an individual contracts COVID during the show?

This should never be the exhibitor, but discussions on pandemic insurance have been popular. It doesn't hurt to clarify who, if anyone, is liable, as this information may alleviate concerns your company has about its legal risk in such situations.

#### QUESTION 9

## What food and beverage guidelines does show management and the venue have in place?

Exhibitors will need to know their hospitality options. The show may allow no food in exhibits, only precooked food in exhibits, or eating only in designated areas of the exhibit hall. In addition, it's crucial to have clarity on any options (and restrictions) that your staff may face in terms of their own lunch and snack breaks throughout the event.

# Keep it Clean

With trade shows resuming, health and safety is at the forefront of everyone's minds. Follow this primer to ensure your exhibit exemplifies COVID-era cleanliness. *By Betsy Earle*



**A**s we look forward to expos and events coming back in full force, show and venue management, exhibitors, and attendees will need to work together to make sure that the show floor is a safe place for everyone regardless of age and/or general health. While recommendations will no doubt vary between shows and venues, which themselves will be relying on evolving information from the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exhibitors should still plan for how to keep our booths as sanitary as possible in the COVID-19 era — and revisit some best practices pertaining to cleaning and tidiness.

Early in the pandemic, I earned my Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) Trained Technician certification by completing an online course that educates participants on how to prepare for, respond to, and recover from biorisk situations in the workplace. Based on what I learned, I've put together the following primer with my top tips on exhibit cleanliness.

**Work with your exhibit house and/or suppliers to create an easier-to-clean booth environment.**

A clean exhibit starts long before a show opening by choosing materials conducive to maintaining a sanitary space. If you are printing new fabric graphics, ask if there are options with

antimicrobial features and confirm that your selection can be machine washed. Hard-panel infills and laminate fixtures are easy to wipe down on a regular basis during a show, but be sure to inquire about which cleaners are safe to use, especially if any surfaces are printed with custom graphics. And keep in mind that glossier finishes tend to hide streaks (such as those left by a disinfecting wipe) better than matte materials.

When it comes to flooring, I suspect we'll be seeing a lot more high-density foam, vinyl, and other solid and smooth options, as these will be easier to thoroughly wash and sanitize on a regular basis — particularly for exhibitors that take a DIY approach to cleaning. That said, it's unlikely exhibit carpeting is going away any time soon. If you go the carpet route, I recommend reviewing the exhibitor manual to see what daily floor-cleaning services will be offered, as COVID concerns may prompt show management and the general service contractor (GSC) to provide more thorough options than a quick after-hours vacuuming.

Finally, consider your furnishings. A leather ottoman may be luxe, but one upholstered with a synthetic material will hold up far better to regular wipe-downs.

**Review the cleaning options in the exhibitor services manual and get your orders submitted on time.**

Cleaning services in many convention centers are typically handled by either the GSC or a company specific to the venue. If you are looking for someone to clean your flooring during the show, most multiday events offer both vacuum and shampoo service. I like to order vacuum service for the day before the show opens to pick up any dirt and debris from install. As I've mentioned in past columns, it behooves you to order such services

before the early bird deadline, as your rate will be discounted by approximately 30 percent compared to ordering on site. Vacuuming is the most common cleaning service listed in the exhibitor manual, but you can always call your show representative or visit the exhibitor services desk to inquire about other offerings. It remains to be seen who will shoulder the responsibility for adhering to what are sure to be more stringent guidelines and standards, so this is one section of the exhibitor manual you'll want to review thoroughly.

You will also have the option to order wastebaskets, which will be emptied occasionally throughout the show. These are often referred to as "corrugated wastebaskets," as they're made from folded corrugated cardboard. You'll typically be supplied with a few extra plastic liners, and the grand total will be in the neighborhood of \$20 to \$40 per receptacle. Most shows allow exhibitors to bring their own wastebaskets, but be aware that they won't be emptied by venue staff if you don't place a service order.

### **Be proactive and come up with an on-site cleaning game plan.**

While we may not know much about what city, state, and venue mandates will look like in terms of cleaning requirements, there are resources to help us navigate these uncharted waters and begin to put the framework of an on-site cleaning plan in place.

For one, many convention centers, venues, and hotels have earned or are in the process of earning GBAC STAR Facility Accreditation, which means they are maintaining detailed cleaning, disinfection, and infectious-disease-prevention programs. Other trustworthy businesses have enacted similar policies. For example, Disney World has a protocol for sanitizing high-touch surfaces on a specific

**A** perfunctory spray and wipe with most "powerful, germ-killing" cleaners won't get you as close to godliness as you may think.

frequency. Many of these organizations list their COVID-era policies and practices on their websites.

Face-to-face marketers can replicate many of these businesses' practices by coming up with similar plans. This document need not be fancy, but it should break down what steps you'll take before, during, and after show hours. Begin by examining your exhibit's floor plan and identifying what areas most people will congregate in and which surfaces will be the most frequently touched. Then determine both 1) how you will disinfect each surface, e.g., wipes, spray cleaners, a UVC light wand, etc., and 2) at what interval you will perform this cleaning. A surface such as a reception-desk countertop could warrant disinfecting every 20 or 30 minutes, while the doorknob to a seldomly accessed storage closet may only need a twice-daily wipe. Although your plan may need to be modified once you learn what guidelines a particular show has put in place, you'll still have set yourself up for success by putting pen to paper sooner rather than later.

### **Arm yourself with the right supplies — and use them correctly.**

All cleaners are not created equal. During my GBAC training, I learned that the words "cleaning," "sanitizing," and "disinfecting" are not interchangeable, and in some cases the terms are regulated by the government. By definition, cleaning is the physical action

of removing germs, dirt, and debris from a surface using detergents and soaps. Therefore, cleaning products don't necessarily kill germs but rather remove them so they can be disposed of, say by tossing soiled paper towels. Sanitizing involves both removing and killing at least 99.9 percent of germs. Lastly, disinfecting means killing 100 percent of the microorganisms on a surface. For a product to be deemed a disinfectant by the Environmental Protection Agency, it must kill all germs except those in spore form.

Another important matter to consider is dwell time. No, in this context I'm not referring to the time attendees linger in your exhibit, but how long a cleaning agent needs to sit on a surface. This information can be found on the product's label. For example, the label for a popular multipurpose cleaner says the product needs to be on a surface for one minute to sanitize it and six minutes to disinfect it. The front of another household cleaner boasts that it "Kills 99.9% of viruses and bacteria.\*\*" Find the asterisked footnote on the back, and you'll see the product needs a full 10 minutes to do what it claims. To put it another way: A perfunctory spray and wipe with most "powerful, germ-killing" cleaners won't get you as close to godliness as you may think.

Cleanliness is a team effort, and we can all help to accomplish this goal. A hygienic trade show floor keeps you, your colleagues, and your customers safe, and following these tips will contribute to just that. **E**



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# Safe Space: How the GBAC is Helping the Industry Reopen

Patricia Olinger, executive director of the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC), explains how the GBAC STAR Facility Accreditation program is helping venues safely reopen. *By Ben Barclay*

## Patricia Olinger

Patricia Olinger is the executive director of the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC), a division of the cleaning-industry association ISSA. She has been involved with the development of international standards for biorisk management for more than 20 years and is the current team leader of the group that developed the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards for Biorisk Management. Prior to joining GBAC, Olinger was an assistant vice president in the Office of Research Administration and the executive director of the Environmental, Health, and Safety Office at Emory University, where she helped care for Ebola patients in 2014.

**T**raditionally, trade show venues have focused on the appearance of cleanliness: Is the exhibit hall presentable? Do the bathrooms smell pine fresh? But the COVID-19 pandemic has forced venues to take a microscopic look at their practices to see if their protocols are effective at mitigating the risk of people contracting the coronavirus. That's in part because until the pandemic is firmly in our collective rear-view mirror, show organizers, exhibitors, and attendees are going to require assurances from convention centers, hotels, and restaurants that surfaces are sanitized instead of simply spotless, and they're going to ask about HVAC filtration systems to gauge the risk of exposure to airborne pathogens.

And in today's climate of caution, it's unlikely stakeholders are going to take a venue at its word. That's where the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) enters the picture. To help

businesses assuage the public's fears, the organization developed GBAC STAR Facility Accreditation. Since the program was created, more than 70 U.S. convention centers have earned the GBAC STAR Facility seal, and additional venues are working through the accreditation process.

But what exactly does GBAC STAR mean for visitors? We sat down with GBAC's executive director, Patricia Olinger, to learn what to expect from accredited facilities.

**EXHIBITOR Magazine:** A lot of people in the exhibition industry aren't familiar with GBAC. Can you provide some background on the organization?

**Patricia Olinger:** GBAC is a division of ISSA, the world's leading trade association for the cleaning industry. GBAC itself really came together right after the 2014 Ebola outbreak. Several of us were involved with that outbreak very intimately. I was part of Team Ebola at Emory University



**GBAC**

Hospital, which treated four of the Ebola patients in the United States. Other GBAC scientists were also in the response area or have worked in professional disinfection. So GBAC's scientific advisory board consists of infectious-disease experts who have significant experience developing quality-management systems.

Once risks are identified, we help venues address a host of questions: What is their risk mitigation? What kinds of cleaning products are they using? Do they have SOPs [standard operating procedures] in place? What are their contingency plans? Should they require masks? How many hand-sanitizer stations should they have?

At GBAC, we really believe that we are here as a partner to work with the facilities individually. It's common for our accredited venues to call us and say, "Hey, have you heard of this piece of equipment? What do you think about it?" Or they ask, "We're considering doing A, B, and C. Will that work?" And it's a learning experience for everybody. For instance, maybe a hotel asks a question about a challenge that a convention center has already solved. We pass that solution on. GBAC has become sort of a central hub to help businesses fill in the informational gaps.

**EM: What about convention centers as a whole? Say I'm comparing the Las Vegas Convention Center to McCormick Place. Will they be employing different solutions to address similar problems?**

**PO:** Some things will become common. For example, I went to the Together Again Expo at the Orange County Convention Center. Attendees and staffers were wearing masks, there were temperature checks at the door, hand sanitizers were all around, and seats were spaced apart. Those types of things are going to look similar.

But convention centers may approach other solutions differently. For example, one may have electrostatic sprayers to disinfect surfaces while another might use a different type of sprayer. Or one might use crews to disinfect and clean at night while another might use robotics to do those tasks. There are a lot of solutions available to tackle similar issues.

Take escalators, for example. Handrails get touched by a lot by people. We're finding several ways to continuously disinfect them, whether the venue has someone there constantly wiping them down or installs UVC lights. Manufacturers are becoming extremely innovative at finding new solutions.

**W**hat works for one facility based on the equipment it has and the disinfectants it uses will look different than its neighbor.



**EM: Why has GBAC taken such a key role in the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**PO:** When the pandemic hit, we recognized that businesses weren't trained for or equipped to address the crisis. We immediately put all of our training online, but we soon recognized that training wasn't enough. We started getting phone calls from places asking us, "How do we reopen with confidence? How do we assure our employees and customers that we are ready to reopen in a safe manner?" Because of this clear need, we established the GBAC STAR Facility Accreditation program.

**EM: Can you explain what this accreditation means?**

**PO:** The facility accreditation process helps venues develop a robust quality-management plan based on 20 elements. They complete a risk assessment to figure out where chains of infection are likely to occur. One of the risks may be the possibility that an infected individual comes into the facility. So, will they screen for symptoms? Take temperatures? Do they have a program for cleaning or disinfecting the high-use touchpoints?

What we've found is that different venues — whether it's a convention center, hotel, spa, or restaurant — require different mitigation procedures because work practices vary widely. Our expertise is that we can work with each venue to help it identify where that potential chain of infection can happen and ways it can mitigate or disrupt it. So our accreditation process works as a partnership — it's not pass or fail. And it's a plan that allows for continual improvement.

**EM: So it sounds like this is not a one-size-fits-all deal.**

**PO:** Right. What we've found is that if we are very prescriptive and say, "Thou shalt do A, B, and C," it doesn't work well. People like to check a box and feel like they are good, and that gets dangerous because a bug or virus doesn't really care about that rule. So what we help venues do is put in place performance-based programs, meaning that if they want to accomplish X, these are the protocols they need to have in place. And what works for one facility based on the equipment it has and the disinfectants it uses will look different than its neighbor.

HVAC systems are another common issue. A venue might ask us if it should install a HEPA [high-efficiency particulate air] filter. That would be great, but what if its HVAC system isn't sized for a HEPA filter? Are there effective alternatives? What we do is study multiple options to find out what works from a scientific standpoint, and then we help businesses fill in their gaps. GBAC is something of a sounding board providing them with objective information and solutions.

**EM: Can you explain what's involved in the application process?**

**PO:** First, a facility's management team submits an application form, and then we send them a lot of information within 24 hours. They get the GBAC STAR handbook explaining the process and a template for putting together their initial 20-point plan. Venues also get access to our required GBAC fundamentals online-learning course and are put in touch with a GBAC subject-matter expert who can address their questions.

Applicants then compile and submit their documents for review

through a portal. At this point there is some banter with their GBAC advisor, who helps them revise their plans and fill in any problematic gaps they might have. Once they submit their initial round of documents, it usually takes two to six weeks for the review process, which is pretty quick compared to other accreditation programs, such as LEED certification.

**EM: Once a facility is accredited, does the process stop there?**

**PO:** Absolutely not. Management systems such as the 20-point plan require continuous monitoring and updating, so accredited facilities will have to review and resubmit their plans each year for reaccreditation. Management will need to look at their plans and ask, "Is there a gap we need to fix?" or "Do I need to retrain staff or provide additional training?" In my experience with compliance-related activities, if you go beyond a year without reviewing and updating your plan, things start to fall apart.


**EM: Does GBAC have a system in place for updating accredited facilities to ensure their protocols and practices align with the latest information about combating COVID-19?**


**PO:** We send newsletters to accredited facilities and those in the application process that keep them up to date on changes and developments. GBAC is also launching an educational forum where facilities can find solutions to their specific needs. Through these different avenues, we're hoping to keep people up to date on the latest technologies and protocols.


**EM: How has the pandemic changed cleaning practices?**


**PO:** For one thing, janitorial staff is coming to the forefront. In the past, nobody saw — or wanted to see — a facility actively cleaning. It was done at night when no one was around. What we're finding out through


## Simple Tips for Exhibiting Safely:


 Keep plenty of hand sanitizer available throughout your booth and use it frequently.

 Determine what high-touch surfaces you need to disinfect, how often you need to clean them, and what chemicals will be most effective.

 Educate your staff on infection-prevention protocols and be sure they follow them. This will set the tone for visitors coming into your space.

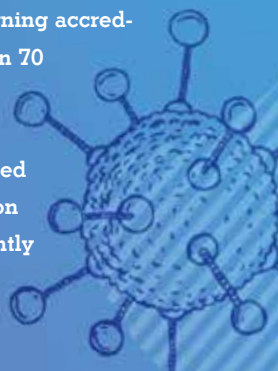
 Wear masks — correctly. That means over your nose and under your chin.

 Find out what the venue and show will and won't be doing to clean and disinfect in your booth. Then you know what you'll be responsible for.

 Ask questions and prepare for potential on-site situations.

## To find out whether a venue has GBAC STAR accreditation:

The GBAC STAR Facility Directory ([www.gbac.org/directory](http://www.gbac.org/directory)) is a searchable tool with a comprehensive listing of accredited venues and facilities that are committed to earning accreditation. More than 70 convention centers in the United States have earned their accreditation with more currently working through the process.



surveys is that visitors really *do* want to see that venues are preventing the spread of disease by cleaning door handles and escalator rails and wiping down chairs following a keynote address. Everyone wants to see the technologies and hygienic practices at work.

I've also noticed that people are becoming more knowledgeable about disinfection. All of the sudden, people are experts on foggers and electrostatic sprayers and the dwell time needed for specific chemicals to sanitize a surface. And to me, that's really exciting. **E**



# Seven Tips for Safe Staffing



**D**uring preshow training, it's key that your staffers understand and are willing to promote your brand's in-booth safety expectations. Show and venue management are likely to set guidelines that exhibitors and attendees are minimally expected to follow. However, a company may have more stringent expectations for in-booth behavior, and exhibit staffers are going to be on the front line in terms of communicating these practices to guests. So what can exhibit managers do to take some of the load off of their reps? EXHIBITOR asked Matt Hill, president of staff-training firm The Hill Group; Barry Siskind, president of International Training and Management Co.; and experts from the retail world to weigh in.

## Post Signage

"Have signs clearly posted at entrances to your exhibit, as well as inside for larger spaces, that explicitly tell visitors what level of safety is in place for your booth regarding masks, hand shaking, social distancing, etc.," Hill says. It takes the burden off your team since signs are clear indicators that higher-ups made the decisions. Plus, in case any sort of questions arise from visitors about the expectation, staffers can simply refer to the posted signage and explain that it's company policy.

## Offer Personal Protective Equipment

Show management is almost certain to provide a place for attendees to get hand sanitizer and face masks. "There's nothing wrong with exhibitors offering the same service in their booths," Siskind says. The complimentary PPE will alert visitors that there are health-related expectations. Consider having PPE at the entrance of your exhibit (with signage) as well as a staffer who can address any concerns about in-booth expectations.



### **Establish Messaging and Protocol**

Be prepared for booth visitors who may object to your policies, particularly those pertaining to wearing masks. In an article for Supermarket News, representatives from law firm Fisher Philips recommended retailers train customer-facing employees on what to do if guests don't comply. Their suggestion is to politely inform visitors of your company's policy requiring masks and ask if they can provide them one. If attendees refuse, there should be a pre-identified individual (perhaps the exhibit manager) booth reps can call in to resolve and/or deescalate the situation.

### **Provide Alternatives**

One specific objection exhibitors should be prepared for is guests with underlying health conditions that prevent them from wearing masks. In this case, Supermarket News suggests

providing reasonable alternatives that won't inhibit breathing, such as offering full, clear face shields. Other experts recommend having all information in the booth available on iPads — along with any activities, videos, etc. — allowing reps to step into the aisle and engage with mask-averse prospects without requiring them to move inside your booth space.

### **Set Appointments**

"A 10-by-10 booth is a small space," Siskind says. "Having a conversation with more than one visitor will take up the available space. If the show or company has social-distancing guidelines, consider having one front-desk staffer responsible for greeting visitors and setting up appointments." He or she can even collect contact information and send reminders about upcoming meetings to participants via email or text message.

### **Read the Audience**

Even if show management, your company, and the venue staff are comfortable with shaking hands and standing toe to toe, don't assume all of your booth visitors are. "In this case, follow the lead of the visitor as far as shaking hands and social distancing," Hill says. "You want every visitor to your booth to feel comfortable and valued."

### **The Basics Still Apply**

"Not shaking hands does not mean hands should be kept in pockets," Siskind says. The booth-staffing basics still matter. "Continue to have open body language, which means no crossed arms and facing toward the visitor," Hill reminds. "Also, smiling still counts even when wearing masks because visitors can typically tell if you're smiling by looking at your eyes." **E**

# Conference Rooms in the Age of COVID

Are enclosed conference rooms still appropriate for an industry emerging from a pandemic? Industry veterans weigh in and offer several alternatives along with tips to modify a meeting space to accommodate safety precautions. *By Linda Armstrong*

**T**rade shows are all about face-to-face interactions and sit-down, in-person meetings. Before COVID-19 became a thing, these encounters often took place in enclosed rooms, free from prying eyes and show-floor commotion.

But now what? Given the pandemic, do full-on conference rooms still make sense? And what adaptations can exhibitors make to continue face-to-face engagements but keep safety top of mind? EXHIBITOR posed these critical queries to a handful of industry veterans. Combined, their answers will not only help you decide whether an enclosed setting is still the best way to go but also serve as a sort of bare-bones guide for safe on-floor conference environments.

Before you consider how to devise a COVID-friendly meeting room, first determine whether such a space is absolutely necessary. That is, get

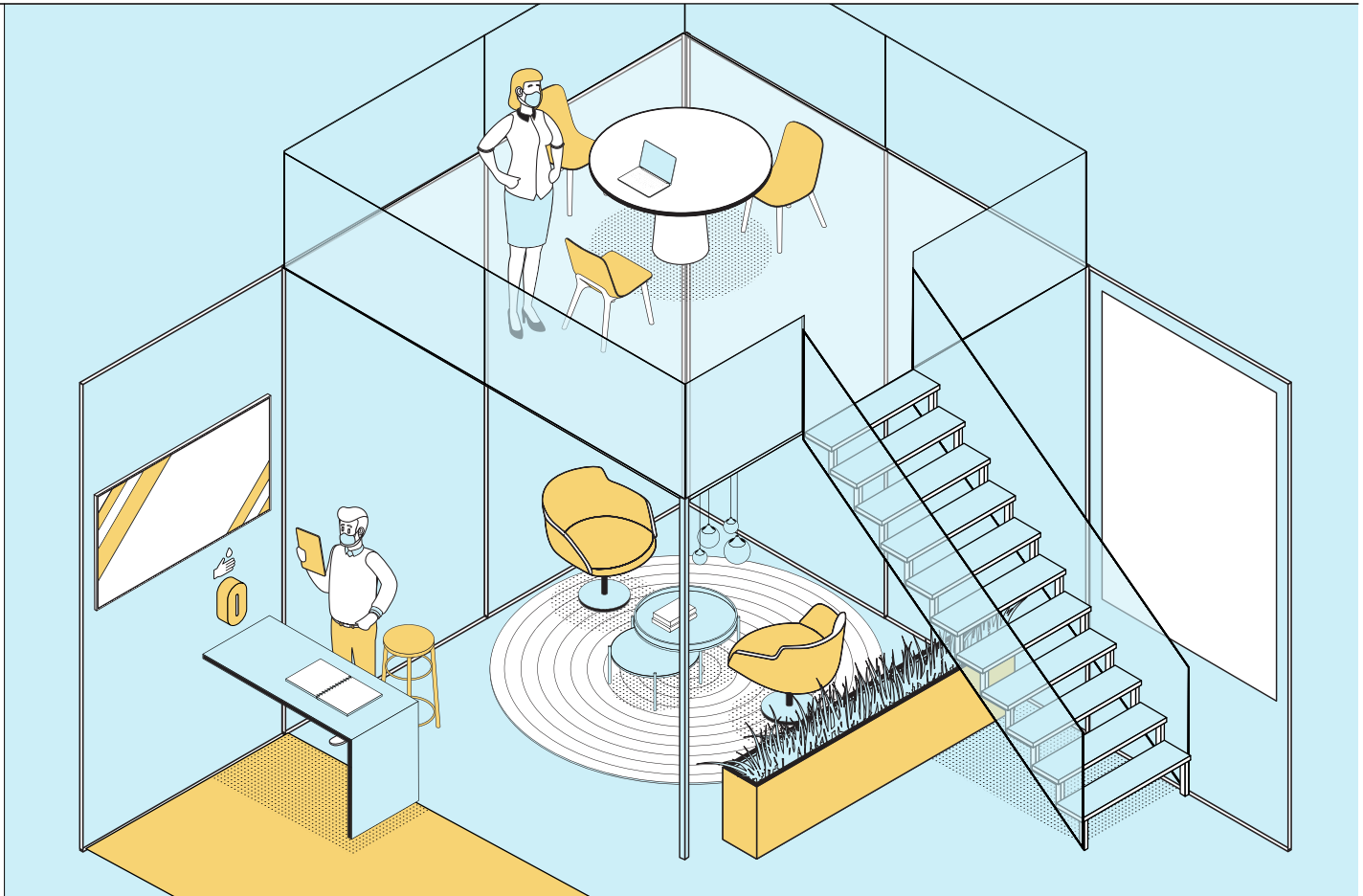
crystal clear about why you need an enclosure and what precise purpose it serves. Chances are a closed-door space is a nice-to-have item rather than a compulsory element.

"Closed-door locales provide extreme privacy," says Pat Friedlander owner of Word Up. "If you're holding top-level discussions with the folks from Walmart, for example, those attendees likely don't want the people at Target to know what they're doing, and they certainly don't want their sensitive conversations overheard. If you and your attendees need this level of confidentiality, an enclosed space is essential. But consider whether a semiprivate environment that limits noise and interruptions may actually be all you need."

Katina Rigall Zipay, creative director at Classic Exhibits Inc., concurs. "Many exhibitors view conference rooms as de-rigueur elements," she

says. "Often, they're using them simply because they've always done so or because they provide a sort of VIP experience for a few customers and prospects. But in the age of COVID, when any closed-door space may create safety concerns — and will certainly require additional precautions and accommodations — it's imperative to determine whether an uber-private environment is critical, or if something slightly less secure and more pandemic friendly will suffice."

Once you've answered this all-important "why," you can replace a previously enclosed space with a safer and more open environment that still acts as a unique in-booth gathering locale. Or, you can maintain your meeting room — whether on or off the show floor — but remodel it, so to speak, to meet social-distancing guidelines. Here are the road maps for these two disparate paths.



## Replace the Space

If you don't need the extreme privacy of a fully walled-off setting, opt for an open-air iteration that still functions as a discussion zone. Here are some options to do just that.

► **Swap out walls for a table, chairs, and acrylic.** One possibility is to devise simple table-and-chair arrangements with a sheet of clear acrylic down the center of the table, says Courtney Cantor, marketing director at Hamilton Exhibits LLC. This is a great option if you merely need to sit down and talk. You can also set up a laptop on one side and mirrored monitor on the other so staff can safely offer product info and presentations while social distancing.

► **Employ creative dividers.** "To produce the perception of an enclosed environment but maintain substantial air flow through the space," Cantor says, "opt for louvered or even movable walls and pergolas

that allow for easy air movement." Zipay concurs. "Think about fabric structures, horizontal half walls, materials with clever cutouts, and more to delineate an area," she says.

► **Go green and focus on flooring.** Aside from wall-like dividers to define the zone, Todd Dailey, vice president of creative at Visual Communications, suggests you also consider flooring and greenery to mark out some meeting territory. "A series of evenly spaced live plants can delineate an environment, as can carpet inlays, a switch in flooring materials, or even floor graphics," he says. Similarly, Jay Menashe, CTSM, vice president of sales and marketing at EDE Corp., suggests that seating elements in and

of themselves can function as barriers. "We like to incorporate comfy chairs with high backs — almost like giant thrones," he says. "When assembled in a circle or square, the pieces work together to create a sort of wall, adding both privacy and an interesting aesthetic to the space."

► **Double up.** Another viable solution is to move the meeting to an open-air double deck. "Granted, adding a deck solely for this purpose may be cost prohibitive," says Kevin Carty, executive vice president at Classic Exhibits Inc. "But if you already have a double deck, this upper-level environment can provide much of the privacy afforded via a traditional enclosed conference area."



## Remodel the Room

If privacy and security are of prime importance and none of the replacement options fit your needs, experts offer the following advice for revamping a traditional enclosed room to accommodate COVID precautions.

► **Expand.** “First, enlarge the room’s footprint,” Carty says. According to the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE), the optimum floor density (based on a 6-foot radius around individuals) is 28 square feet per person. To determine how many people you can safely accommodate in a room, divide its square footage by 28. “Certainly, recommendations are changing rapidly,” Carty says. “But using these IAEE parameters, to safely accommodate four people, your conference environment must be slightly more than 10-by-10 feet.” So start your remodel by determining the maximum number of people you want to accommodate at once. Then enlarge the room accordingly.

► **Install safety precautions.** Sources recommend several protective measures depending on the size of the space, maximum capacity, number and length of discussions, and whether the room has a ceiling. The more people you have and the more time they will spend in the enclosure, the more of these steps you should take. These elements can include everything from air purifiers and Plexiglas table dividers to ultraviolet sanitizers and full-on ventilation systems, Friedlander says.

► **Supply hand sanitizer.** Whether provided via freestanding pedestals, wall mounts, or desk attachments, hand-sanitizing stations should be situated at the entrance to every conference room. “People will touch

a host of surfaces, such as doorknobs, chairs, tabletops, laptops, etc., within the environment,” Friedlander says. “So encourage them to sanitize as they enter and leave the enclosure.”

► **Plan for ongoing sanitization.** “Work sanitization time into your meeting schedule,” Carty says. You need to allow time not only for staff to wipe down surfaces, air out the room, and perhaps run through a UV sanitation cycle, but also for cleaning solutions to dry after application. Additionally, consider appointing a certified COVID Compliance Officer to ensure cleaning protocols for the room (and the booth) are established and followed during the show, Friedlander says. **E**

# Ready Set Go!

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our industry has been devastating. TWI has been focused on quality staffing and strong financial health. We look forward to when our industry recovers, and our industry colleagues and event workers are back to work. The people are what makes our industry great. When events and exhibitions return, TWI is prepared and ready to go.

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One century ago, when the Spanish Influenza burned through the world, people were bombarded by another kind of plague: one of misleading ads for soaps that promised to stop the scourge dead in its viral tracks. With industrial-sounding names like Yadil and Toxol, these cleaners vowed they had superpowers of sanitization.

Today, fortunately, we know much more about viruses and cleaners. When it comes to exhibits and how their materials should be disinfected, there is a variety of valuable information available from government sources. While exhibit managers may not always be directly involved in cleaning and sanitizing their booths, it helps to understand what solvents should be used and how they should be applied. This knowledge can help them assure both staff and attendees that all the proper precautions have been taken to keep their spaces safe. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about cleaning agents that should help give your exhibit a clean bill of health. *By Charles Pappas*

### **What kinds of cleaners should be used?**

With the outbreak of COVID-19 last year, many cleaners began touting their efficacy against the coronavirus. In response, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created a fast-track process for companies to submit their cleaners to the federal agency, where they would be tested to see if they were indeed capable of killing the virus on surfaces. If the EPA approved the cleaners, the manufacturers could then add claims to their product labels that they were effective against “Emerging Viral Pathogens,” or some similar declaration. So when selecting cleaners, be sure to look for both the claim and the EPA approval.

### **Are these cleaners only good against COVID-19 and nothing else?**

No. The EPA requires that cleaners work in at least one of three related areas. The cleaners have to be potent against the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (that is, COVID-19); against a pathogen harder to kill than COVID-19; or against a different human coronavirus similar to COVID-19. Beyond that,

# Cleaning

the cleaners are of course suitable for all regular disinfecting and can be used safely that way as well.

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**Is there a master list of these products?**

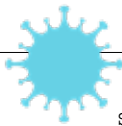
Yes. The EPA has an easily found section devoted to these cleaners that's known as the EPA List N. The list is available online at <https://cfpub.epa.gov/wizards/disinfectants>. Once there you can search among the more than 550 products using a variety of relevant variables, including the EPA registration number on a cleaner's label, its general use (i.e., residential, health care, or institutional), surface types it's appropriate for (e.g., hard or porous), and simple keyword.

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**Can I use any of these products on surfaces that come in contact with food?**

When you locate a given cleaner on the EPA's List N for use against COVID-19, you will be able to view the types of surfaces on which you can safely use that particular product.

To see this information, click the green "+" sign next to a product's registration number and look for the term "Surface Type." If that cleaner



is appropriate for use on surfaces that touch food — for example, dishes, countertops, and cooking utensils — the writeup for the item in that section will indicate so.

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**Does it matter how long a cleaner stays on a surface before being wiped off?**

Yes. All the cleaners on the EPA N list are formatted such that each listing displays the manufacturer, product name, EPA registration number, active components, and, among other variables, the necessary contact time, aka dwell time. This term refers to how long the cleaner should remain on the surface it's designated for to be effective before wiping it off. Note that the dwell times tend to vary widely, going from just a few seconds to six or more minutes. If the cleaner you choose is wiped off before that time, it may not be effective, so it's essential that personnel know — and adhere to — the guidelines.

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**Does the EPA advise how often surfaces should be cleaned?**

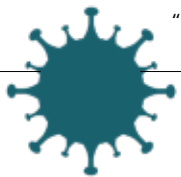
Yes. The EPA threshold for this is relatively low, suggesting surfaces that

are often touched should be cleaned and disinfected at least once per day. Overall, though, the more frequently any given surface is touched by multiple people, the more regularly it should be cleaned and disinfected with any of the appropriate products on the EPA's List N. To that end, the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) recommends exhibitors consider increasing the frequency of cleaning surfaces, — especially countertops, tabletops, and any products on display — to every one or two hours the show hall is open.

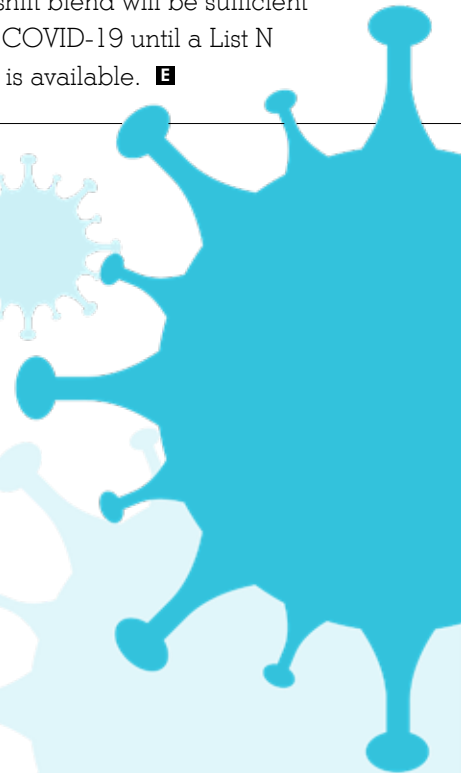
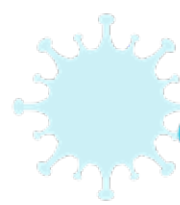
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**If cleaners on the EPA's list are unavailable for any reason, is there anything I can use instead?**

Yes. If any of the EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, there are simple and easily acquired alternatives that can be used in their place. For example, you can concoct your own disinfecting solution by adding one-third cup of bleach to one gallon of water. According to the EPA, such a makeshift blend will be sufficient against COVID-19 until a List N cleaner is available. **E**



# House







## Give and Take: Keeping Promotional Items Safe

**W**hether it's a ritzy promotional item like a leather wine valet or more reasonable one such as lip balm, most giveaways have one thing in common: They're touched by one or more staffers who hand them to attendees, or they're deposited in, say, a bowl from which guests pluck a tchotchke, often fondling several others before making their choice. Even with the welcome success of vaccinations and the decline of new COVID-19 cases, a lingering question is do giveaways still pose a risk?

According to the Mayo Clinic, the chances of catching COVID-19 by touching an infected surface (rather than via respiratory droplets you might directly breathe in) are generally minimal. Minimal, nevertheless, does not mean impossible. According to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the virus can persist on various surfaces anywhere from hours to several days, which could pose a problem for giveaways that are constantly handled by both

staff and attendees. For example, COVID-19's lifespan on surfaces ranges from 24 hours on cardboard to three days on plastic, five days on paper, and up to nine days on metal — all materials that might regularly comprise giveaways of various kinds.

While we hope the worst of the pandemic is behind us, Stuart Campbell Ray, vice chair of medicine for data integrity and analytics at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, notes that variants of COVID-19 — the worst of which might be as much as 50 percent more transmissible — appear weekly and could disturb the industry's return to the show floor. So exhibitors should remain vigilant. For those face-to-face marketers who wish to communicate they're sensitive to the potential of transmission through promotional items, EXHIBITOR canvassed several experts in the exhibition industry for easy-to-implement tactics that will ensure your giveaways won't end up giving attendees something they don't want. *By Charles Pappas*



### One on One

Limit the number of staff handing out

giveaways, suggests Randy Burk, senior account director for Pinnacle Exhibits Inc. "Depending on the size and booth layout," he says, "limiting the number of staff facilitating giveaways to one to three people will reduce contact." Exhibitors can thereby reduce the number of people touching the giveaways and add an additional precaution by having the staffers — who Burk empathizes should be vaccinated and masked — visibly clean the items and any surface they touch.



### It's a Wrap

No matter if you have a single dedicated

staffer or several handing out giveaways, there's one tactic exhibitors can use that works in both situations. "Another option to reduce contact in the booth space is to offer pre-packed giveaways set out on a counter or in a bin," Burk says. A pre-show campaign could allow attendees to download a coupon to be redeemed at the booth space, which ensures zero contact. While the kind of container doesn't necessarily matter, consider opting for cardboard, as COVID-19's lifespan on this material is relatively short.



### Going Postal

Instead of handing out promotional items in the

booth, consider shipping them via post. "One way to avoid problematic giveaways is by sending them through the mail in exchange for completing a task in the booth," says Lorre Crisswell, vice president and group account director for Impact XM. "Exhibitors could direct visitors to use a QR code or a website to play a trivia contest, a game, or even peruse product literature, and then reward them by mailing out a gift afterward." This inherently reduces the handling of giveaways, still maintains the connection between an exhibitor and attendees, and provides an additional post-show touchpoint.



### Target Practice

One way to avoid the mass

handling of tchotchkes is to be more discerning about who gets them. "Consider directing your promotional items only to highly targeted audience members who complete something in exchange for a giveaway," says Susan Brauer, principal of Brauer Consulting Group LLC. "For example, they get a promotional item in exchange for watching a demo of your products/services,

having a full discussion with a product/service expert, or requesting a representative contact them after the show." Limiting the giveaways in this manner cuts down the amount of handling and has the collateral benefit of perhaps making your select group of targeted attendees feel more appreciated.



### Special Delivery

For exhibitors with high-value

customers who are slow to return to trade shows, one twist is to bypass activity in the booth altogether. "To maintain contact with any part of your audience reluctant to return to exhibitions, some exhibitors are designing and sending custom boxes with gifts for their customers and sometimes sales staff," says Donna Shultz, founder and CEO of MSM Inc. "For example, you could send new product samples for customers to be the first to taste. We've also made custom gift boxes with everything you need for a champagne toast to kick off a sales meeting." The gifts add a pleasant surprise to customers' days and reminds them of your company.



### Intangible Assets

In a time when physical give-

aways can seem potentially hazardous to some, one way

to circumvent that fear may be to offer services instead. "Exhibitors could hand out redeemable codes for things like Lyft rides, Uber Eats, and similar amenities," says Adriano Almeida, the head of creative services and strategy for Kubik Inc. "Giving services to customers can be just as attractive as any tangible product." For instance, staffers could present qualified guests with a small card they could scan that takes them to a link where they could redeem the electronic swag at a future date."



### Welcome to the Machine

Another effective tactic to avoid

contagion by people is to simply bypass the human element. Steve Deckel is partial to using vending machines to disrupt giveaways. "While the cost of distributing them this way can be greater," says the CEO of Deckel and Money-penny Exhibits, "it greatly reduces the number of people who can touch each item and offers visual proof to attendees of how safe the giveaways are because no one's handling them." In addition, during show-hall hours a staffer on site can sanitize touchpoints on the machine — e.g., buttons — between uses to minimize risk and underscore to visitors how safe the redemption process really is. **E**



**Mobile Device**

Disinfect Group USA’s Mobile Disinfecting Units are an all-in-one solution that boast touch-free hand-sanitizer dispensers, thermal temperature cameras, people counters for crowd-capacity management, and the option of adding an FDA- and EPA-approved disinfecting fog feature. What’s more, their panels can fully customized with corporate colors and branding. **Contact:** Disinfect Group USA, [www.disinfectgroupusa.com](http://www.disinfectgroupusa.com)



**Peddle to the Metal**

The Foot Operated Hand Sanitizer Dispenser Stand may not have any frills, but it’s budget friendly, long lasting, and gets the job done. The rugged steel and aluminum construction supports pump-action bottles of sanitizer up to one gallon in size, and its mechanical – and hands-free – operation negates the need for a power source. **Contact:** Testrite Visual Products Inc., [www.testrite.com](http://www.testrite.com)

**Wait Watchers**

Waitwhile is an app that enables attendees to claim a spot in a virtual line using a kiosk or their own smartphones. After adding their name and contact info, visitors are able to wait anywhere they want and receive email or text notifications about their position in the queue. Marketers can prioritize important guests and see how long each attendee has bided his or her time.

**Contact:** Waitwhile Inc., [www.waitwhile.com](http://www.waitwhile.com)



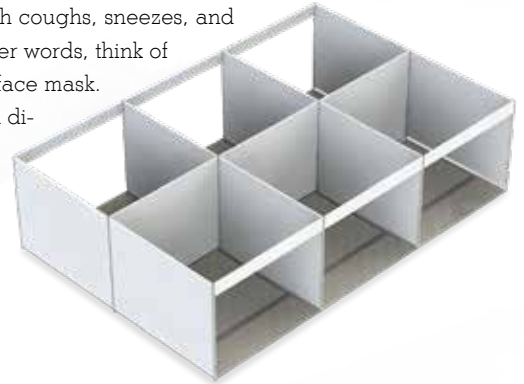
# New Products for

Now that in-person events are resuming, face-to-face marketers are being distancing, crowd size, sanitization, and more. Here is an assortment of corporate event is as safe as it is effective. *By Brian Dukerschein*

### Cut From a Different Cloth

In a series of third-party tests, Expoknit fabric from SMT Expo Systems, a division of Glenmore Industries LLC, outperformed the leading pipe-and-drape fabric in reducing the spread of germs through coughs, sneezes, and general air movement. In other words, think of Expoknit as an exhibit-sized face mask.

**Contact:** SMT Expo Systems, a division of Glenmore Industries LLC, [www.smtexpo.com](http://www.smtexpo.com)



### In the Clear

Cort Events' line of 6-foot-tall clear dividers foster an airy ambiance regardless of your square footage. Study metal feet and frames support transparent acrylic infills that can be left plain or customized with decal logos, graphics, and more.

**Contact:** Cort Events, [www.cortevents.com](http://www.cortevents.com)



### Razzle Dazzle 'Em

Amp up your staffers' attire with Foxyware Inc.'s shimmering face masks. The all-over sequin model, which offers a two-ply mesh liner and an insert for a disposable filter, comes in a range of colors and can be printed with custom artwork. Meanwhile, the machine-washable, rhinestone-embellished option showcases more bling than Elton John and Liberace combined.

**Contact:** Foxyware Inc., [www.foxyware.com](http://www.foxyware.com)



# the New Normal

tasked with following regulations and best practices regarding social COVID-conscious products that can help make sure your exhibit or

**Hands Off**

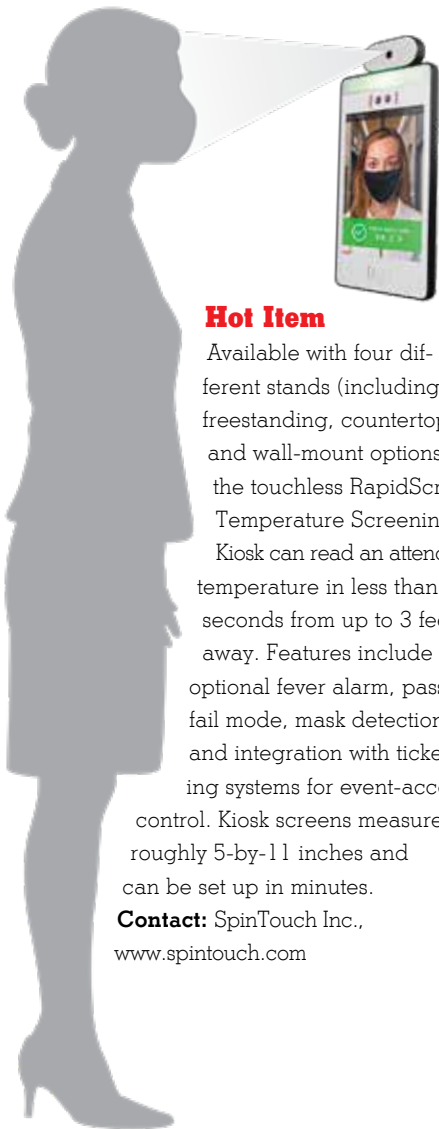
Exhibitory's TouchFree 2020 Retrofit service is customized to address the unique content and format of each client's digital interactive and includes an updated TouchFree device featuring enhanced hand-tracking technology with no perceptible latency. After the retrofit, a typical touchscreen activation is transformed into a "Minority Report"-like experience in which attendees can navigate menus and select options via waves of the hand.

**Contact:** Exhibitory, [www.exhibitory.com](http://www.exhibitory.com)



**Immediate Circle**

Maintain proper social distancing and traffic flow in your booth or at a corporate event with Safety Pois floor-graphic kits, which contain long-lasting, 12-inch PVC stickers and explanatory signage. In the simple color-coded system, green indicates "transit" areas; yellow marks "pause" spots where visitors can view products, enjoy demos, etc.; and red identifies "stop" zones for long-term lingering. **Contact:** TCommunications SRL (dba Safetydots.net), [www.safetydots.us](http://www.safetydots.us)



**Hot Item**

Available with four different stands (including freestanding, countertop, and wall-mount options), the touchless RapidScreen Temperature Screening Kiosk can read an attendee's temperature in less than two seconds from up to 3 feet away. Features include an optional fever alarm, pass/fail mode, mask detection, and integration with ticketing systems for event-access control. Kiosk screens measure roughly 5-by-11 inches and can be set up in minutes.

**Contact:** SpinTouch Inc., [www.spintouch.com](http://www.spintouch.com)



**Band Together**

SafeBands from CrowdSync Technology Inc. are a colorful, attention-grabbing way for eventgoers to make their social-distancing preferences known. Embedded in these stretchy wristbands are a trio of LEDs that emit green, yellow, or red light, respectively indicating that a wearer is comfortable with close interaction, is cautious, or prefers strict distancing. Users can set their preferred LED color by toggling a switch. **Contact:** CrowdSync Technology Inc., [www.crowdsynctechnology.com](http://www.crowdsynctechnology.com)



### Clean Sweep

Boasting color-changing LEDs; a 21.5-inch LCD monitor; Wi-Fi, Ethernet, and 3G/4G connectivity; and an integrated Android media player capable of displaying any combination of images, videos, social-media feeds, and more, it's easy to forget the Digital Advertising Hand Sanitizer Kiosk's core function is health and safety. Available in freestanding and wall-mount configuration, the kiosk accepts liquid, foam, and gel sanitizer.

**Contact:** E&E Exhibits Inc., dba E&E Exhibit Solutions, [www.exhibitsusa.com](http://www.exhibitsusa.com)



### Steer Clear

Remarkably lightweight and easy to assemble and take down, Testrite's Clear Room Partitions stand 6 feet tall and are available in widths of 3 or 6 feet. A combination of transparent, fire-retardant vinyl infills and super-slim frames results in "barely there" dividers for meeting areas, lounges, and more. Marketers also have their choice of a stationary or wheeled base for mobile setups. **Contact:** Testrite Visual Products Inc., [www.testrite.com](http://www.testrite.com)

### Count on It

The Automated Occupancy Counter Kiosk monitors attendee traffic and keeps a near-real-time tally of visitors that is displayed on the unit's monitor, which can also play a range of marketing content. Administrators set the maximum occupancy for a given space and receive an alert via a web-based dashboard when that limit is reached. A system of external webcams means that a single kiosk can observe multiple entrances and exits.

**Contact:** SmartSource Computer & Audio Visual Rentals, [www.smartsourcerentals.com](http://www.smartsourcerentals.com)



### The Magic Touch

RE:nvent Touchless is an easy-to-install device that employs a suite of sensors to detect users' hand movements from distances of up to 39 inches from a monitor and translate them into on-screen commands, e.g., a swipe brings up the next presentation slide while an "air poke" taps an icon. **Contact:** Reality Engineering Solutions LLC, [www.realityengineering.com](http://www.realityengineering.com)



**Pass Time**

The CrowdPass platform allows marketers to send attendees customized vaccination-status and COVID-symptom questionnaires prior to an event, track their responses, and issue health “passports” that can be displayed on eventgoers’ smartphones for hassle-free entry. **Contact:** CrowdSync Technology Inc., [www.crowdpass.co](http://www.crowdpass.co)

**Stand Guard**

Consider the MOD-1378 Multifunction Sanitizer Stand the Cadillac of cleanliness stations.

A rugged steel baseplate and extruded-aluminum post support not only a touchless hand-sanitizer dispenser but also a clamshell case for either an iPad or Surface tablet, which can be positioned in landscape or portrait orientation. Two acrylic literature racks and a 12-by-16-inch double-sided graphic complete the kit. **Contact:** Classic Exhibits Inc., [www.classicexhibits.com](http://www.classicexhibits.com)



**Count Off**

The plug-and-play THR-600 Occupancy Control Kiosk makes it easy to monitor how many attendees are entering and exiting an event, as well as whether they’re wearing masks. Administrators can quickly set maximum occupancy levels and program a wide range of dynamic content, both of which are displayed on a high-res monitor. What’s more, kiosks can be branded with custom vinyl logos and graphic wraps. **Contact:** Peerless Industries Inc. (dba Peerless-AV), [www.peerless-av.com](http://www.peerless-av.com)

**Smart Move**

The SmartXcan’s hands-free, thermal-scanning technology can give accurate temperature readings for up to 700 people per hour. When attendees lean over the sensor, the SmartXcan determines their temperature in a fraction of a second. A reading below 100.4 degrees results in a green light signal and audio tone, while higher readings trigger a red flash and separate aural alert. (Units can also be programmed to give discreet, remote feedback.) **Contact:** Production Resource Group LLC (PRG), [www.prg.com](http://www.prg.com)



### Round About

HoloTubes can display everything from images and videos to 3-D representations of presenters and product simulations. However, rather than a traditional touch-screen, users can now navigate and manipulate virtual objects via the TouchFree device's hand-tracking technology that registers the slightest movement. In other words, attendees can select content, rotate a product rendering, and take part in a complex demo with a few waves of the hand — no sanitizing wipes required. **Contact:** Exhibitry, [www.exhibitry.com](http://www.exhibitry.com)



### Guiding Light

EGID badges use LiDAR technology to ensure social-distancing preferences are met. For example, if a wearer programs a preferred distance of 6 feet, the badge would start flashing yellow when a person first crosses that perimeter and change to red if he or she continues to come closer. As the person steps back, the flash adjusts to yellow and then stops when the minimum distance is met.

**Contact:** Pubsphere Exhibits, [www.egidprotect.com](http://www.egidprotect.com)

*To see additional products designed for marketing in the age of COVID-19, visit [www.ExhibitorOnline.com/Covid](http://www.ExhibitorOnline.com/Covid).*

### Hold the Phone

As soon as a smartphone — even inside its case — is automatically lowered into the Cleanstation, a battery of high-intensity UV-C LEDs inside the unit activate to sanitize the phone's entire surface in just 30 seconds. Each device is approximately the size of a hardcover book and comes with three finish options (brushed steel, slate, and white), making this an easy and sleek way to facilitate high-tech hygiene among staffers and attendees. **Contact:** Simplehuman LLC, [www.simplehuman.com](http://www.simplehuman.com)





# Safe Exhibiting

We asked 10 experts to share their insights and opinions on safe exhibiting.

“New **technology** such as sanitizing foggers will take exhibitors beyond constantly wiping down high-traffic areas.”  
— Richard J. Remetta, president, Vue-More Manufacturing

“Safe exhibiting relies on **constant communication** and support between facilities and their clients.”  
— Mac Campbell, deputy director, Baltimore Convention Center

“Everyone has a **responsibility** for safe exhibiting — like clean facilities with safety precautions, open aisles with hand sanitizer stations, stylus pens for touchscreens, branded facemasks for staff, etc.”  
— Denise Lineberry, vice president, marketing, Apple Rock Advertising & Promotion Inc.

“Exhibitors can use clever and **cost-effective** marketing tools, such as vinyl flooring printed with QR codes, to keep experiences touchless and attendees safe.”  
— Lorin Glazer, vice president, K&S International Inc.

“Create **industry standards** for safe exhibiting to make it easier and more integrated for all stakeholders: exhibitors, builders, labor companies, and GCs.”  
— Dave Walens, CEO, Brumark, an Exploring Inc. company

“Brands are looking for **larger spaces** to allow for physical distancing and adding clear in-and-out pathways.”  
— Dick Wheeler, president, ProExhibits

“A hands-on/hands-off approach, such as games that execute both on kiosks and personal devices by scanning QR codes, allows everyone to **engage** at their own level of comfort.”  
— Brad Froese, director of marketing, Captello

“We’ve seen exhibits come back using **creative designs**, with double decks and trussing to create open spaces, ensure physical distancing, and maximize booth space.”  
— Tara Ericson, CEO, beMatrix USA

“We find a mix of programs — sanitation/disinfection, GBAC STAR certification, upgraded HVAC systems, and training sessions with trade show contractors and labor partners — builds **confidence** in our exhibitors.”  
— Chinyere Hubbard, senior vice president, communications and marketing, Walter E. Washington Convention Center

“To constitute safe exhibiting, it’s important show organizers require all exhibitors, attendees, and buyers be fully **vaccinated**. This will create a safer business environment.”  
— Steve Riches, principal, Laguna Displays Inc.

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