

READY TO REOPEN

A PLAYBOOK

FOR YOUR

SMALL BUSINESS



COVID-19 has impacted every business differently. Every business will face tremendous challenges as our nation begins to recover from the coronavirus pandemic. In this guide, we'll walk you through the steps your business will need to take to reopen as restrictions are lifted across the country and your business prepares for the "new normal."

1 Gather Information and **BEST PRACTICES**

There's a lot of information out there about COVID-19, so you'll need to focus on the most reputable, reliable sources to find the right guidance for your business.

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [Guidelines for Opening Up America Again](#)
- [Coronavirus.gov](#)
- [U.S. Chamber of Commerce State-by-State Business Reopening Guidance](#)
- [Your state's official government website](#)
- **Your state or governor's official social media accounts**
- County or municipal websites
- **CDC.** The CDC has created [individual guidelines](#) for numerous industries that are uniquely impacted by COVID-19
- **American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA).** The AIHA has also created detailed [industry guidelines](#) for sectors like at-home service providers, construction workers, gyms, salons, retailers, restaurants and others as they plan their return to work.

2 Prioritize SAFETY

- **General hygiene practices:** Consult the [CDC's guidelines](#) for proper, frequent handwashing and respiratory hygiene. Assess your business's current cleaning and sanitation practices against the [CDC's recently released recommendations](#).
- **Personal protective equipment (PPE):** If your business was subject to the [Occupational Health and Safety Administration's general requirements](#) for employee PPE use, make sure you continue to adhere to those guidelines when you reopen.
- **Social distancing:** Consider how your current workspace can be reconfigured to encourage social distancing if telework is not possible. The [CDC recommends](#) installing physical barriers, changing layouts to put at least six feet of distance between work stations, closing communal spaces, staggering shifts and breaks and refraining from large events.
- **Employee health monitoring:** Develop a plan for monitoring your employees' health, with a particular focus on COVID-19 symptoms.
- **Positive cases:** Decide how you will handle a positive case of COVID-19 in your workplace after you reopen. The [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) says the plan should cover isolating the sick individual, limiting the number of people who have contact with that person and contacting the local health authorities.

3 Make a PLAN

Develop your new business plan while taking into consideration:

- **Your budget**
- **Your space/location**
- **Your supply chain**
- **Your products/services**
- **Your revenue impact**

4 COMMUNICATE

Follow these tips to communicate with your business's various stakeholders throughout the process:

- **Employees:** Explain details of the changes, new work practices and guidelines for health and safety.
- **Customers:** Use multiple channels to ensure your message is widely received and reinforced.
- **Vendors/partners:** If you plan to continue working together as your business reopens, let them know what (if anything) might need to change about your working relationship

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EXECUTE

- **Get input from your team.** If your business is customer-facing, ask your staff for their thoughts and concerns about interacting with customers in the near term, given the current circumstances in your state.
- **Plan out an anticipated schedule of pre-opening tasks.** From deep-cleaning and sanitizing to rearranging furniture to encourage social distancing, make a list of everything you'll need to do to get your business customer-ready.
- **Coordinate with your vendors.** If you've been shut down, start reaching out to vendors re-establish your supply chain and administrative support. If you've been operating in a limited capacity, plan ahead for how your inventory needs may increase as business picks up.
- **Give your customers a heads up.** Even if you don't have an exact date for reopening yet, [stay in touch with your customers](#) and let them know to stay tuned for an upcoming announcement.

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BE READY to adapt to any obstacles

- **Anticipate and prepare for challenges.** No matter how prepared you are, you may find that some elements of reopening your business are more difficult than you expected. You may need to change directions quickly and make swift decisions to overcome obstacles.
- **Check in with your employees.** During your first few weeks of operating "normally" again, frequently check with your staff and see how they're feeling. See if there's anything you can do to make their jobs easier or give them greater peace of mind about their health and safety.
- **Know that you won't get it perfect on day one.** Mistakes may happen as you execute your reopening plan. If something goes wrong, quickly acknowledge the situation and let employees and customers know how you're making it right.
- **Create formal and informal processes for getting feedback.** Listening to your employees, customers, vendors and partners during this time is critical for your future success. Have one-on-one conversations, share polls on social media and send out anonymous surveys via email to encourage your stakeholders to share their thoughts.
- **Analyze your sales data, customer behavior and ROI.** Your numbers likely won't bounce back right away, especially if you've changed your product or service offering. Keep an eye on your business analytics to understand what's working and what's not.
- **Gauge the overall community response.** Pay attention to what customers are saying about you (and your competitors) as everyone adjusts to your industry's operational changes. Take customer suggestions seriously and always acknowledge anyone who mentions your business directly.

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RESPOND and pivot your strategy accordingly

- **Make adjustments based on the feedback you receive.** Your employees and customers may be feeling apprehensive and nervous right now, so it's more important than ever to meet their needs. Do what you can to adjust your operations in response to stakeholder feedback.
- **Communicate evolving changes in a timely, transparent manner.** Let people know what's happening and why. If appropriate, give credit to the employee or customer who inspired the change so your audience knows you're listening to them.
- **Continue mapping out your road back to normal.** Normalcy is not going to happen overnight. In fact, "normal" for you moving forward may look very different from what it looked like pre-pandemic. Your journey back to the volume of customers you had before may take time, but all your business can do is keep learning, growing and evolving as new information becomes available.

CO— by the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#) is here to guide small businesses every step of the way as they recover from this global crisis. We publish new content every week covering up-to-date COVID-19 tips for businesses in our Coronavirus Small Business Guide and our Guide to Reopening Your Business. You can also follow us on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and Flipboard for the latest updates.