



## **Fan attitudes have changed and are not going back to what they once were expected to be.**

How sports venues react to COVID-19 will define their businesses for the next decade.

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We exited the plane without talking. We walked toward the terminal, and a security guard motioned to me to stay in line. I didn't even know there was a line. Ahead of me, I saw a man sitting at a table and a set of ropes on stanchions guiding us where to go, just like the concession lines in our venues. No one spoke. They just motioned to us, and we were expected to understand their gestures.

Apparently, I was too close to the guy in front of me, and I was walking too fast. This time, the security guard's eyes told me he meant it ... slow down. I glanced over to the man at the table and saw he was pointing something at each person as they reached a certain point in the line. I thought it was a gun.

It was March 3, 2020, and I had just landed in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The "gun" turned out to be a device to assess a person's body temperature from a distance.

Luckily, I passed the temperature test and was escorted to proceed to immigration. Over the next 13 days, I encountered the same procedure in three different countries. Each time, I felt a little more at ease because I grew to expect it, but not once did anyone explain to me what was happening nor tell me why they were doing it.

While planning every event, imagine the event is over, and ask yourself what needs to happen for everyone to feel good about their visit?

My analytical mind evaluates every transaction when I am out and about. I view those moments as opportunities to practice my profession. I pause, observe, and reflect. How could they have created a more positive experience for all of us?

In retrospect, I appreciate each step I witnessed. The attention to detail told me the staff was very conscientious and trained to do their job. I was comforted to see the steps being taken to keep everyone safe. And I respected that everyone was put through the same set of requirements, so it felt fair. But it could have been so much better.

As we prepare to open our sports and entertainment venues and outline new procedures, I encourage you to strategically identify what perception you want to leave with each fan throughout their experiences. While planning every event, imagine the event is over, and ask yourself what needs to happen for everyone to feel good about their visit as they drive home? Then backtrack and identify the steps needed to be taken to get there.



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### **Your employees will make the difference.**

They will build trust and confidence in your new future. Give them the training and tools they need to succeed and make your organization shine.

### **Remind your staff that perceptions are reality for most people.**

In the past, you may have advised staff to be stealth in their cleaning regimen. Today, we want customers to see them cleaning and have product knowledge of what they are using.

In a recent [survey conducted by Morning Consult](#), the global data intelligence company found that 81% of consumers said habitually cleaning high-traffic surfaces would make them feel more comfortable in businesses amid the coronavirus outbreak. Fifty-five percent said it would make them feel “much more” comfortable.

### **Take steps to strengthen organization-wide collaboration.**

Establish relationships with key community partners and stakeholders. Our third-party contractors become our partners in this endeavor, so bring them into the conversations, make sure you are considering how new procedures will impact them and their workers, and listen to their ideas. Being on the same page with those partners that represent you and your team is critical.

### **Ensure alignment with state, federal, and local health regulations.**

Share details that can help everyone in your venue understand the “Why” of your new guidelines. Share statistics like this one from the same Morning Consult survey: Sixty-one percent of respondents said stepping into a business in which employees are wearing masks would make them feel more at ease.

### **Strategically select language to create positive perceptions.**

Scrutinize signage and craft phrases for correcting behaviors to demonstrate empathy, credibility, and true concern for the safety of your guests. Post detailed FAQ's on your website, like [the NFL does with its clear bag policy](#).

Workers around the world are suddenly being asked to enforce the rules that govern facilities during the coronavirus pandemic. The rules should be clear, specific, and use consistent language. Help ease the pain by teaching My Rule Enforcement Etiquette Formula: *Why – Who Says – State the Rule, Law, or Guideline – End the Conversation on a Positive Note*

It sounds like this: “To provide a safe environment for the public and expedite fan entry into stadiums, the NFL limits the size of a clear bag to 12” x 6” x 12”. Thank you for complying.”

### **Think proactively.**

Prioritize education, mask distribution, and voluntary compliance. If you are going to enforce the rules, then distribute masks, gloves, and hand sanitizers to support the endeavor. As rule enforcers address infractions, make sure they are modeling social distancing as well.



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**Seek innovative business solutions to create a safe and healthy workplace for your fans and your employees.**  
Foster a sense of resilience and support your operation beyond the pandemic. It is time to create a new business model as circumstances are now different.

We aren't going back to normal as we once knew it. Our success depends on how we create our new future. How you react to COVID-19 is going to define you, your organization, and your fans for the next decade. There is a new consumer mindset, and our clients' expectations are heightened. Some are scared. Just like I was when I thought someone was pointing a gun at me.

**What future do you want to create for your brand?**

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