TEAM Software
by WORKWAVE

# Adaptability on the Front Line

A Quick Guide to How the Pandemic is Reinventing Support Services

As is the nature of pandemics, many of the changes they bring about are profound and lasting. The effects of these changes have been seen particularly in the support services sector, where functions such as cleaning and security are on the front line of the battle to control and mitigate the effects of the virus. Here's a high-level overview of six ways the pandemic reinvented support services.
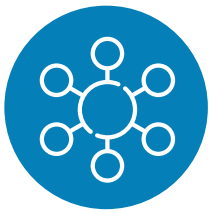
Micro-Engagements and Smaller Contracts

With an increased need for cleanliness wherever people are gathered, there is now a greater number of small contracts, often requiring just a single person to carry out the work. Similarly, in security, there is an increased need for lone security guards to attend premises.

Managing smaller teams over a greater number of micro-engagements is difficult. Meeting that challenge without increasing overheads is only possible with scalable technology, designed to handle distributed workforces across several sites.
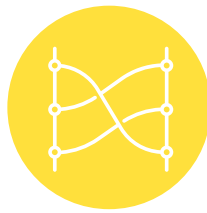
Flexible Work

The trend towards more flexible working has accelerated. As McKinsey stated from its September 2020 survey findings: "Two years from now, about 70 percent of the executives in our survey expect to use more temporary workers and contractors onsite at their companies than they did before the crisis."

Employers can monitor temporary or contracted workers with mobile apps and digitised systems with functions to handle employee training, communication and compliance tracking.

Cleaning Has Become More Flexible

Cleanliness levels need to be maintained and people want to be reassured. They want to see cleaning happening, even in high-traffic areas, whilst people are around.

As part of this "cleaning boom," you can expect an increased focus on accountability and proof of service. Workforce management solutions with location-tracking technologies can verify when and with what frequency an area has been serviced. All data from these tools can be reported on and shared with customers.

Security Is Now Meet-and-Greet

Security guards have also become more public facing, often being a customer's first human interaction with the business. A security guard's "main" job ostensibly is to control numbers entering the building and ensure masks are worn, but who also serves a "front-of-house" function in welcoming customers and making them feel at ease.

Mobile workforce management and employee self-service tools can be used to communicate, collect information, and in some cases, track the history of responses to health questions. Look for digital solutions that use functions like forms or reports to quickly collect information, or that have simple messaging tools that can log a history of responses.

New Opportunities for Temporary Staff

While many existing operations have had to increase staffing to help manage their response to COVID-19, entirely new services are also being created, requiring people to make them function. In healthcare, for example, services such as the distribution and provision of vaccines has increased demand for new hospital facility support staff such as cleaners, guards, drivers and porters.

It takes flexible, sophisticated systems to get new staff in place with the speed the public expects. It's still necessary to get the most out of the technology you currently have, in order to handle short-term and intermediate-term needs. It's also equally important to lean into these times as an opportunity for determining what you may still be missing in your business software for the future as well.

Greater Appreciation of Front-Line Workers

For key worker roles like cleaners and security guards, their hourly rates are increasing in some areas. This is especially true for those workers who have the additional skills needed to interact with the public, who can be relied upon to always be where they have committed to be, and who understand the importance of their role.

A good management system must be able to allocate people based on the many different characteristics and skills that are now required in this "new normal." Far from being interchangeable, each cleaner and guard has a unique set of skills and should be placed in roles that make the best of those abilities.

These trends all emphasise the growing importance of having the right partners and solutions in times of crisis, and beyond. Even when times are good, support service businesses operate on small profit margins. When times are turbulent, streamlining and connecting your core business functions is even more important, as is partnering with IT and technology providers who understand and can anticipate your industry and business needs. For an expanded look at the recent reinvention of support services, **download our accompanying eBook**.

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