

4 Ways to Prepare for Customers with COVID Fears

5 MIN READ



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Many event-goers have fears as they return from a year of COVID-related isolation, social distancing and general crowd avoidance. The stakes are high as you re-engage and welcome back your customers, so you want to make sure you are strategic, empathetic and thoughtful.

Oftentimes, the most available emotion when fear strikes is anger. And angry customers are most often born out of distrust, offended feelings, embarrassment, guilt, disappointment and anxiety.

With a little preparation, you can mitigate or outright remove these fears!

1. Prepare the Message

Once you've developed a rock-solid plan for how your organization, as a whole, will meet COVID guidelines and expectations, the next step is to develop an equally thorough communication plan.

The message(s) regarding these, likely new, safety protocols must be simple and clear. The clarity and simplicity of the message will allow the customer and the venue team to easily understand the expectations of all parties. If the guidelines cannot be simply stated, they will cause anxiety and, in turn, fear.

It's also incredibly important to deliver this message about the [health-worthiness](#) of your venue and events to everyone – customers, team members, general public, media, volunteers, delivery personnel... literally everyone. Receipt of the simple and clear message opens the gateway to understanding, allowing the customer to dispose of their fear of the unknown.

2. Prepare the Venue

No matter their comfort level, all of your customers will appreciate a clean, well-prepared atmosphere filled with kind expressions of welcome. Find ways to express your signature "touches" that they missed this year – whether it's a standard welcome greeting with the door held open to relieve a touchpoint or a photo op commemorating their return, customers feel more welcomed and accepted when you overtly demonstrate how glad you are to see them.

Where changes in systems of entry, concessions and seating occur, provide clear signage to encourage understanding without embarrassment. When a customer feels welcomed back with a mixture of nostalgia in the familiar and excitement for a clear path to the future, their nervousness that bubbles into fear will be assuaged.

3. Prepare the Response

Have a plan for facing the customer who still responds with fear due to feelings of rejection, anxiety or distrust. Know that they have been facing trauma this year, just like you.

Some of your customers may simply need to know that they have been heard, so intently listen to their concerns. Other customers may have legitimate suggestions that will improve your services, so listen to their feedback. Consistent, generous and timely responses to customer concerns will instill trust that dispels fear.

Your customer facing team has fears as well, so it's critical to empower them. You can do this by arming them with standard answers to emotionally charged questions, responses to common scenarios they're likely to face and efficient paths to escalation when assistance is needed. Most, if not all, staff fears will be calmed with the knowledge that they have been prepared and feel supported.

4. Prepare Yourself

Don't show up to face your customers with your nerves on edge. Take time for extreme self-care through proper nutrition, rest and exercise. Encourage yourself by remembering your past successes with difficult customers. You have faced irritated customers before this, and succeeded.

Each venue will have its own special blend of response to COVID fears, and at the base of these fears is the need we each feel to control our environments. By preparing yourself, the message, the venue, and the response, your concerns will be lightened and you will be ready to face the customer with a confidence that will calm their fear.

AudienceView conducted a survey of more than 3,300 members of the TheaterMania community to better understand how this on-going health crisis is impacting their appetite for the arts and spending behavior. Generated from the survey results, we created a report that will assist arts organizations of all sizes in their efforts to generate revenue, engage with their community and prepare for the reopening of theaters. [Click here](#) to download the full report.

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