

# Theater Reopening Plans: 50+ Post-COVID Questions to Consider

8 MIN READ



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With the COVID-19 vaccine rollout gaining momentum in many parts of the world, theaters and [performing arts](#) venues are excitedly [preparing](#) to reopen their doors and begin selling event tickets. It's both a time of elation and opportunity. It's also a time to evaluate (and re-evaluate) your [performing arts](#) organization's path of return.

Although each live events organization has unique circumstances to consider (largely dictated by factors like venue type, region, building age, core demographic, etc.), many questions and considerations are consistent across the board.

Here's a list of more than 50 questions to consider when building your theater's reopening plan:

## Staffing

- Will you need to rehire staff?
  - How many?
  - How quickly?
  - Are they still available?
- How will you retrain your staff to ensure that everyone is following all new policies and procedures?
- How will you properly social distance staff...
  - When they are in offices?
  - Inside the venue?
  - Backstage?
  - Inside the [box office](#)?
  - Working concessions?
- What will be mask requirements for staff in each work location, including outdoors (parking, sheds, yoga classes)?
- Will you require all staff to be temperature checked on entry?
  - What are the temperature parameters?
  - Who will monitor the temperature?
- Will you (can you) require staff to have a:
  - Health pass?

- COVID test?
  - Vaccine?
- Will you allow entry to a break room or kitchen?
  - What will the capacity limits be?
  - Will you allow eating within the room?
  - Will you allow food storage, whether open or sealed?
- Are any of your staff members athletes/symphony/choir/actors? What will the special accommodations be for these groups to create a safe space and comply with potential union requirements?

## Customer Management

- How will you control egress?
  - Open to customer choice?
  - Usher walking to each row at a time to allow exit?
  - Verbally announce egress sections to exit by multiple sections at separate areas?
- Will you ticket with staggered entry times to control door crowding?
- Will you leverage your box office software's [timed entry ticketing](#) solution?
- Will doors open straight through or hold in the lobby?
- Will you require customers to have a:
  - Health pass?
  - Negative COVID test?
  - Vaccination proof?
- Will you create physical barriers for non-ticketed seats due to social distancing using:
  - Seat covers?
  - Signs?
  - Complete removal of seats?

## Venue

- Will you have sanitation stations?
- Will you place barriers for bathroom distancing at:
  - Sinks?
  - Stalls?
  - Hand drying?
- Will you limit capacity in bathrooms?
- Where do you expect to see lines and how will you eliminate bunching?
- Where will you place hand sanitizer stations? How many will you have?
- Will you use venue fogging?
- Will you do seat cleaning after each event?
- How will you communicate the [health-worthiness](#) of your venue?
- Will you participate in the Verified Healthy Buildings Program through Underwriters Laboratories (UL)?
- When you have multiple shows in one day, will you clean between events? How will you do it?
- What physical signage will you post?
  - Government regulation signage?
  - Floor distance stickers?
  - COVID safety protocols?
  - COVID precautions taken by the building to encourage customer confidence in the healthy worthiness of the venue?
  - “Welcome Back” / “We Missed You” appreciation signage?
- How will you manage concessions to limit crowding and lines? Will you use:

- Seat delivery?
- Remote purchasing with pick-up area?
- Seating in bars and venue restaurants?

## Box Office & Marketing

- What customer data will you use for marketing?
  - What COVID preparedness message will you send with your marketing?
  - How will you handle politically charged responses to COVID restrictions or COVID fear?
  - How will you encourage customers to return, while showing compassion for their losses?
- How will you communicate with ticket buyers when government restrictions change after purchase?
- How will you fulfill credits for cancellations or postponement?
- Will you reach event budget demands through:
  - 100% capacity and no distancing?
  - Multiple performances to allow for budget viability while distancing?
  - Only less expensive events?
  - Increasing ticket prices?
- How will you stand out in a crowded market of backlogged events with everyone opening up again at the same time?
- Will you price on a broader scale with a high priced premium spanning to low dollar get-in-the-building prices for lower discretionary spending?
- Will you sell with a staggered seat release to allow for opening of socially distanced seats for sale as the public/government shows allowance for closer seating?
- When selling for social distancing, can you:
  - Sell in pods?
  - Sell as a waiting list or GA and then contact the customer with reserved seating options?
- Will you allow refunds due to illness or increased fear after purchase? If so:
  - What proof will you require?
  - What are the parameters of the illness required?
  - Will you offer [refund protection](#)?
- Will you be cashless? Will you remove your cash machines?
- Will you provide hard tickets or mobile only? If mobile only:
  - Will you have digital content for mobile tickets such as pre-show video or highlight reel links?
  - Will you staff the box office for those having issues on the day of the event?
  - Will you sell a souvenir ticket post-event as part of an upgraded experience?

## Customer Experience

- Will you continue or offer virtual or live stream events?
- How will you conduct meet and greets?
  - Virtually?
  - Social distanced meets?
  - In-person with hugs and handshakes?
  - Will there be [photo opportunities](#)?
- How will suites or boxes be sold and serviced?
- Will your venue allow dancing or singing?
- Will valet parking return?

The large number of questions can feel daunting at first read. Make sure you are utilizing a diverse, cross-functional team of problem solvers to develop your answers. Avoid resting on that notion that “[we’ve always done it this way](#)” and do it differently or better when you reopen. The future is uncertain, but that’s what

makes it exciting!

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.

If you're an existing AudienceView event ticketing software client, your product's learning portal includes an online refresher course as well as hundreds of articles to help you with socially distanced seating, pre and post show emails and more. You can also watch your inbox for special offers and programs from AudienceView to help you re-open effectively.