

# CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE IS AN IMPORTANT KEY IN THE RE-OPENING OF AMERICA.

Post-Shelter in Place: The Pathway  
Forward for Your Business



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# POST-SHELTER IN PLACE: THE PATHWAY FORWARD FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Most signs point to a re-opening of businesses on a scaled basis. The COVID-19 pandemic will require fundamental changes to cleaning and disinfecting stationary and mobile electronic devices.

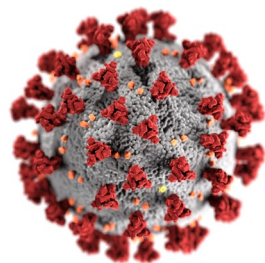
Our country is moving toward our “new normal.” Of course, with COVID-19 still present, it is a scary time for everyone involved, including customers and staff. Now is the time to develop or enhance your processes of providing safe, clean, and disinfected electronics. That is why your business must look radically different.

What will your standard operating procedures (SOP) look like when the pandemic subsides? Will they return to “normal”? What will “normal” look like? What is the pathway forward for your business?

## WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE SOMETIMES FORGET

We know that one of the modes of COVID-19 transmission is accomplished by touching a contaminated surface (we call these fomites) and then touching a mucous membrane (eyes, nose or mouth). This object to person transmission can be instrumental in preventing new cases of the virus in the coming months.

In order to break the chain of infection from surfaces



**“NOW IS THE TIME TO DEVELOP OR ENHANCE YOUR PROCESSES OF PROVIDING SAFE, CLEAN AND DISINFECTED ELECTRONICS.”**

to humans, we need to understand some basic definitions. How do we define “clean” or “cleaning,” “disinfectant” or “disinfection” so that the front-line sales or service associate understands their important role in public health and the spread of CAs?

## CLEANING

Personally, I prefer the definition Michael Berry, PhD, promotes for “clean” and “cleaning.” Clean is a condition free of unwanted matter that has the potential to cause an adverse or undesirable effect. Cleaning is the fundamental management process of putting unwanted matter in its proper place to achieve a clean condition. Your staff should understand these definitions and be able to deliver the desired outcomes on a consistent basis.

For most people “clean” means absence of visible dirt. They advise front-line staff to “clean” surfaces until the visible soil is gone. The data shows that potentially unsafe levels of pathogens can remain on visibly clean surfaces.

When it comes to properly cleaning surfaces, we need to get rid of the term “clean when visibly soiled.” There are more than enough Corona virus-laden bacteria (about a billion!) in the size of a pinhead to transmit the pathogen. When your staff is given the instruction to clean “visibly soiled” touchpoint surfaces, are they looking for soil the size of a pinhead? No. That’s why we should eliminate that term from SOPs.

## DISINFECTANT

A substance, or mixture of substances, capable of destroying or irreversibly inactivating pathogenic (disease causing) organisms, but not necessarily spores, present on a hard, non-porous surface. It is recommended that only hospital-grade disinfectants be used on surfaces as a rule. Disinfectants should only be applied to pre-cleaned surfaces. All disinfectants sold in the America shall have a U.S. EPA registration number.

## DISINFECTION

Describes a process that eliminates many or all pathogenic microorganisms, except bacterial spores, on inanimate objects. In health-care settings, objects usually are disinfected by liquid chemicals called disinfectants.

Factors that affect the efficacy of disinfection include prior cleaning of the object; soil load present; type and level of microbial contamination; concentration of and exposure time to the germicide; physical nature of the object (e.g., crevices,); presence of biofilm (see Tackling Biofilm).

## REMOVING SOIL

Washing or scrubbing a surface physically removes soil and, with the soil goes the germs. The guiding principle is always to remove germs if possible, rather than kill them, when necessary, use the least amount of the mildest chemical or other product that will do the job, because stronger often means more toxic to people and more corrosive to the surface being processed.

## TACKLING BIOFILM

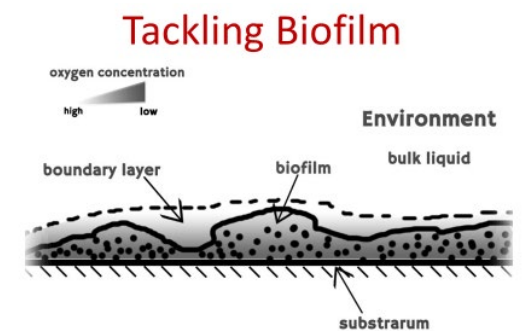
Bacteria on both damp and dry surfaces doesn’t remain as isolated and free-floating life forms; they communicate and colonize with other germs to build a tough, protective biofilm that can withstand even the

strongest disinfectants.

Biofilm protects itself with a tough, thick matrix that makes up two-thirds of the film. You must break up the matrix to make the bacteria vulnerable.

Bacteria embedded in biofilms can be up to 1,000 times more resistant to disinfectants. In fact, biofilms have grown in disinfecting concentrations of quaternary disinfectants. Cleaning with surfactant-based detergents/disinfectants deposits organic residues which some bacteria can metabolize as nutrient source for growth in biofilms.

A study describes rebound of pathogenic organism levels on surfaces 24 hours after cleaning and disinfection. It was suggested that this might be due a failure to address the biofilm that coats surfaces.



**Biofilm protects itself with a tough, thick matrix that makes up two-thirds of the film. You have to break up the matrix to make the germs vulnerable.**

One of the best methods of breaking through biofilm’s matrix is agitating, brushing, or scrubbing the surface to which it is attached. For difficult-to-reach areas, like the nooks and crannies around keys on a payment terminal, a scrub pad or swab helps break down the colonies.

So, let’s ask the question, are the current cleaning solutions working to address the problem of biofilm? The answer is increasingly, “NO.” Einstein’s definition of “Insanity” seems the most appropriate here given that you are repeating the same protocols and using the same products while hoping for a better, different result.

## CLEANING AND DISINFECTION THAT PROTECTS CUSTOMERS

An approach which focuses on establishing a “fitness for purpose” for an electronic device, (i.e., POS terminal, ATM, Self-Checkout, etc.) must consider these three things:

- The combined effectiveness of removal and inactivation processes when used sequentially
- The effectiveness of the procedure in preventing the transmission of contamination
- The time period over which the safety target level can be, or needs to be, sustained.
- Ability to reach all areas and crevices
- An agent with the ability to remove contaminants

Although cleanliness may be next to godliness, it’s also very closely related to disinfection. In fact, cleaning may avert the need to disinfect in some situations because clean and dry surfaces can’t harbor microbial growth for very long.

A disinfectant kills microorganisms. However, depending on the pathogen, preventing the microbes from getting a foothold by removing food and moisture (two essentials for sustaining living organisms) may, in the long-term, be as effective as a chemical disinfectant. In fact, most chemical disinfectants can’t do their job when high levels of soil are in the way. Soil can absorb the active ingredient, provide more places for the germs to hide, and change the chemical nature of the disinfectant.

By removing the soil with an appropriate cleaner, you give the right disinfectant a much better opportunity to kill the target “bugs.”

Understanding how bioburdens of pathogenic organisms accumulate and fluctuate on surfaces after cleaning is required to determine how often surfaces, particularly frequent hand contact surfaces, should be

cleaned and disinfected.

The White House’s plan to re-open the U.S. economy is based (in part) on the current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The guidance states that to prevent future resurgence of the Coronavirus we need to properly clean and disinfect the touchpoints on all point of sale, ATM, self-checkout, self-ordering kiosks, payment terminals, portals/info systems, and access or authorization terminals more frequently.

When determining the frequency of processing these high touch points, consider the “fitness for purpose” as you keep these surfaces from becoming a source of transmission to customers. Should the frequency of cleaning/disinfection be after every customer; every 5th customer, etc.? That is for you to decide with the knowledge that your customers will certainly appreciate the efforts to keep them safe; more frequently is better!

Best Practice: Each time an employee cleans and disinfects a touchscreen or a payment terminal, a single disposable wiper must be used and then discarded. Do not use the same wiper on multiple terminals; this only spreads pathogens from one surface to another, to another.

It cannot be over-emphasized that this is an opportunity for businesses to gain the confidence of their customer base. It’s also a significant responsibility! The industry must use approved and reliable methods, have trained staff and communicate their approaches appropriately. Cleaning, disinfection and communication will be observed by clients/customers and judged by the professional way it is carried out.

We cannot just “wipe around”! Cleaning both the interior as well as the exterior is necessary. You must use tools designed to reach both. These products and processes must be effective in removing contaminants (seen and unseen) that are a threat to public health

## WHAT’S AT STAKE? A CUSTOMER’S LOYALTY!

Maintaining visibly clean surfaces on customer facing electronics is important for influencing public perceptions because cleanliness is a top concern for customers—to the point where a negative experience can have a serious impact on a business’s reputation and bottom line.

Survey results of restaurant patrons from market research firm Mintel revealed almost all of them—96% of those surveyed—ranked cleanliness as the most important component of a visit-worthy experience and 76% said they would be deterred from returning if the table or setting was unclean.

During this post-pandemic period when customers are hyper-aware of touching things in public, the cleanliness of self-ordering kiosks, ATMs, self-checkouts, or payment terminals will become more important than ever. Remember, managers must ensure their staff accomplish three critical jobs: Cleaning for Appearance, Cleaning for Health and Cleaning for Performance!

## FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER’S INSTRUCTIONS

I cannot stress enough, the importance of reading and following the manufacturer’s instructions, use and safety information that are on the electronic products that are in use.



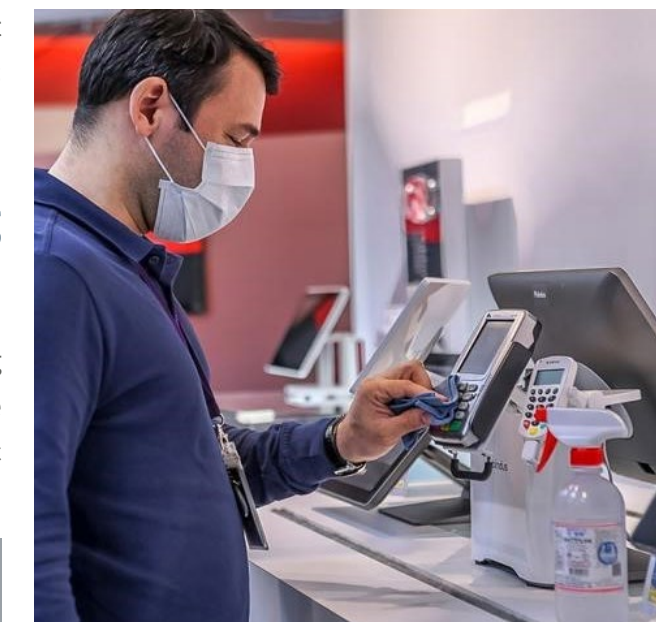
Reputable manufacturers spend thousands of dollars testing their products under all sorts of conditions, because they want you, the consumer, to be satisfied with their products.

If a manufacturer’s product worked for every application, in every climate, under any conditions do you not believe that it would increase the sales of the product if they placed that information on the product label. It is in the manufacturer’s best interests to have a product with as wide an application as possible, with an ability to perform many functions. Negative label statements, such as “Do Not Clean With.....”, do not increase the sales of the product. Hence, the manufacturer only uses those statements when necessary to protect the purchaser and the integrity of the company and product.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FOLLOW MANUFACTURER’S INSTRUCTIONS?

Two reasons:

The first is that you want your customer-facing electronics to look safe, clean and disinfected.



The second reason is that, reputable manufacturers stand behind their products, if they are used for the correct application and maintained properly.

A warranty claim will not be successful if you have not followed the manufacturers’ instructions for cleaning and disinfecting.

## PARTNER WITH AN INDUSTRY EXPERT

REMEMBER: Thorough cleaning is only as good as the tools that are used. While a cleaner applied with a spray bottle and cloth might be an acceptable practice to clean a table or flat surface, the same can't be said for the cleaning challenges of expensive POS, self-checkout payment terminals which are manufactured with crevices, nooks and areas in which bacteria can hide and grow. A simple "spray and pray" won't keep those devices safe, clean and disinfected.

To avoid the "spray and pray" approach it's recommended that you partner with an industry expert. Choose one who can guide you through, provide the best way to maintain your technology including what products to use, guidance on creating standard operating procedures (SOP), employee training, and messaging to employees and customers.

One company, KICTeam, is leading the charge with OEM approved cleaning products designed for your technology. KICTeam have developed a wide range of products including Grab & Go Kits that include everything you need to clean your device in a one ready-made kit. Using ready-made kits help to simplify the steps of cleaning and disinfection to ensure that the process is followed properly.



If proper cleaning products are not used, removing contaminants and bacteria from hard-to-reach areas can be challenging and harmful to technology.

KICTeam offers a wide selection of tested and approved products that are specifically designed and safe to use on technology. Their industry-leading cleaning cards featuring Waffletechnology™ effectively clean hard-to-reach areas including the pathway for card/chip readers and bill acceptors. Other innovative products like the Swisel™, a multi-purpose cleaning tool featuring a durable chisel and saturated swab, allows users to properly remove contaminants from nooks and crevices on technology.



Beyond products, for all the reasons previously stated, using the right cleaning agent at the right time and frequency is just as important. KICTeam carries a wide range of cleaning agents and disinfectants designed specifically for your technology. Their products are safe for both the user and the technology while being highly effective.

Preventative maintenance including a routine thorough cleaning is now more critical than ever. If not properly removed, bacteria and contaminants on technology can lead to health hazards, transaction failures, unscheduled equipment downtime and costly repairs. Applying a standard operating procedure using approved cleaning products is the safest and most effective approach to ensure the health of your technology, employees, customers and brand loyalty.



**J. Darrel Hicks**, BA, Master REH, CHESP, Certificate of Mastery in Infection Prevention (for Environmental Services Professionals) began his career in the management of housekeeping services in 1981 and retired in 2014 as the former Director of Environmental services at a 500-bed, award-winning hospital in the United States.

Darrel is the owner/principal of Darrel Hicks, LLC. His enterprise specializes in B2B consulting, webinar presentations, seminars and facility consulting services related to cleaning and disinfection

Hicks is the current President of the Healthcare Surfaces Institute (2020) [www.healthcaresurfacesinstitute.org](http://www.healthcaresurfacesinstitute.org)

Hicks was President of the IEHA-Uniting Facility Managers Worldwide during the term 2006-2008 and holds the title of MASTER Registered Executive Housekeeper (MREH).

He is an active member of both the AHE (Association for the Healthcare Environment) where he holds the designation of CHESP (Certified Healthcare Environmental Services Professional) and CMIP (Certificate of Mastery in Infection Prevention), and APIC (the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology) professional groups.

Hicks is nationally recognized as one of the subject matter experts in infection prevention and control as it relates to cleaning. He has written and published numerous articles in professional and healthcare related journals as part of his commitment to providing a cleaner, safer and healthier indoor environment.

In 2010, Hicks authored "Infection Prevention for Dummies", a 43-page, pocket-size book the role that proper cleaning and disinfection plays in saving lives and the bottom line.

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