



COVID-19 AND RETURNING TO WORK: FRICTIONLESS ACCESS CONTROL

The COVID-19 pandemic will forever change our lives and have a lasting impact on our attitudes and behavior toward personnel interactions in everyday life, and in the workplace. So, what happens when we go back to the office? Our habits have changed, and it is likely that COVID precautions will remain in effect for many months. Employers will need to adapt and adjust their approach to workplace design and how employees and visitors are processed for entry into their buildings.

In addition to procedural changes to maintain social distancing, leveraging technology to limit the points of contact and to maintain a level of security required for a building lobby will be a key factor moving forward. Touchless and automation technologies will be in high demand.

One helpful step to consider is implementing frictionless access control. This approach balances the need for security with an effortless user experience when entering and inhabiting a space for both employees and visitors. It also limits the “touch points” the user encounters, limiting exposure to germs and viruses.

Focus on Employees

Biometric technologies are probably the most popular methods used for frictionless access control. These technologies include fingerprint, finger/hand veins, hand geometry, iris scan, retina scan and facial recognition. They can be mounted at doors or on turnstiles to control the flow of traffic into a building. Since fingerprint and hand geometry technologies require actual contact of the finger/hand to the device, they will probably not be as desirable because of the COVID situation.

However, trending in biometric technology is facial recognition. Today, with advances in 3D and thermal imaging, facial recognition is much more accurate than older holistic methods and feature-based technologies. Furthermore, facial recognition does not require physical contact with a reader which makes access control completely touchless.

Mobile Bluetooth technology is also an option whereby employers can leverage employees' phones with a mobile access credential to utilize touchless technology for access control. The only downside to this usage happens when

employees cannot access a facility if they are not carrying their phones. Traditional access cards are contactless by nature but due to possible read range issues people tend to touch their cards to the readers. Additionally, access cards have the same disadvantage as phones when employees do not have the cards with them.

Focus on Visitors

Implementing guest management systems offers visitors the ability to check-in remotely via the web. These systems allow visitors to pre-register and enter their information remotely. Visitors will then receive credentials on their phones such as a QR code that can be used to gain access through turnstiles or doors into an office space. These systems can also provide an email notification to a visitor's sponsor upon check in. Kiosks could be set up in lobbies as another means for visitors to register remotely.

Many of these guest management systems include other modules such as package tracking which is also helpful for organizations. Guest management systems also have the added advantage of limiting interaction between visitors and security and can speed up the overall traffic flow in the building lobby.

There will be many other precautions companies will likely take as the workforce returns to the office, which will include new policies and procedures, temperature screening, enhanced cleaning protocols, staggered work hours and workspace configuration to socially distance employees in areas with open cubicles. We will also likely see more widespread use of antimicrobial locking hardware and automated doors. However, the implementation of frictionless access control, whether in the form of biometrics or mobile credentials on employee phones and visitor processing through remote guest management check-in, are positive steps that will not only limit the risk of contact exposure but also streamline the flow of traffic into and out of buildings.



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Steven Draghi has more than 30 years of security experience providing security management, risk assessments, systems evaluations, and systems consulting. This includes integrated access control, video surveillance, intercom, and perimeter control systems. Mr. Draghi applies his background as a former security systems integrator to help clients better understand the installation process and infrastructure requirements.