

Making the decision on whether to open or not to open:

Here are some key things to consider while we wait for the CT guidelines:

1. Learn:

- a. Take the time to read or participate in webinars that are designed to help you open your business. This is the toughest job. There is so much. And not all of it is helpful.
- b. Find good resources. We recommend you go straight to the horse's mouth: SBA, SBDC, WBDC, Treasury, DOL, IRS among others. These important resources will be on our "Back 2 Work" page for you to find easily.
- c. Read every day, no matter how painful it is. Falling asleep at your computer is a likely side-effect but things change rapidly, and sometime they are very big things.

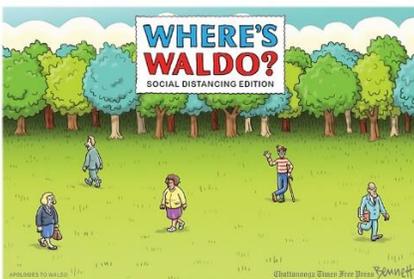
2. Listen: There are 3 important "people" for you to listen to:

- a. The government. Whatever executive orders or guidelines that are created, you need to follow to the best of your ability (within reason, of course... you don't have to jump off any bridges if they tell you to)
- b. Your employees. Start talking to them now. Find out how they are feeling, how are they adapting and what their new burdens are with this crisis-like 5 kids, 4 turtles, 3 dogs, 2 cats, and a partridge in pear tree-or their significant other. Ask them how they feel about returning to work, working with customers, traveling, and all the other tasks they will need to do. Understanding where they are coming from will enable you to create a plan that can accommodate them and still get work done...a win-win for everyone.
- c. Your customers. Can you imagine if we had all invested in zoom or survey monkey? We wouldn't have to worry about filling out any more applications! But since we didn't, it is possible to keep in touch with your customers to find out how they are feeling, are they fearful, are they in the "vulnerable population" and would they be willing to come to your business and under what conditions. A simple facebook post or survey can help you assess when a good time is to open, what you can do to foster confidence and alleviate fear, and estimate your sales volume.
- d. Actually, there are 4. Don't forget your own family. What are their needs, especially with kids out of school? Don't listen only to your dog or cat. They want you gone, they want their house to return to normal with peace and quiet—they are not objective.

3. Communicate: Transparent and consistent messaging is your key to success.

- a. This pandemic is ever changing. Things that we know for sure one day are not what we know the next day. Most of the programs and policies have never existed before this. As our legislators make law, the administrators try to interpret it, their subordinates try to explain it, and the news tries to report it....need we say more? Think about this: agencies that have operated for the last hundred years in their own realm have been forced to integrate with no real systems or technology in place. They are doing their best juggling millions of people and businesses. Be patient, be flexible, keep everyone up to date as to what you are doing and how.
- b. Review your policies and procedures, your employee manual, your complaint process, your reporting process. Make appropriate changes even if they only temporary. That is the beauty of computers. You can change things and then go back to normal with a key stroke.
- c. Make sure you have meetings with your employees, don't forget our friend, zoom. You

- can have meetings to go over new policies such as face masks and disinfecting without having everyone in the same room. And encourage participation so you will have buy-in.
- d. Don't forget to touch base with your suppliers, contractors, delivery persons and the postman. How things are brought into your business by them is just as important as what they are bringing. Make sure they know your new delivery areas, policies and requirements.
 - e. You can keep your customers and potential customers up to date with what is happening at your business through social media. Let them know your progress. Tell them why you are doing things differently...for their safety and your employees' safety.
 - f. We recommend you pick one person in your company to handle all questions and communications about your re-opening. That way there are no inconsistencies or interpretations. Pick whomever didn't clean their lunch out of the refrigerator before you shut down.
 - g. A tone of "educating" or "mentoring" customers and employees works far better than a police state. Communicating in a positive, humorous or caring manner results in better compliance from everyone. You all know that person who purposefully walks the wrong way down the grocery store aisle just because you TOLD them to go the other way! Ask them instead. They may still be crazy but it's worth a try.
4. Evaluate: Monitor federal, state and local guidelines, industry specific guidelines and those of your supply chain so you can adapt your policies.
- a. Pay attention to loosening of restrictions.
 - b. Pay attention to tightening of restrictions.
 - c. Pay attention to legal issues that arise due to the pandemic.
 - d. Make sure you provide all the necessary supplies and PPE needed for your employees and for your customers.
 - e. Monitor your "new" expenditures related to COVID (such as PPE, disinfectants, etc.).
 - f. Monitor your absenteeism rates as well as your customer traffic.
 - g. Create new ways of doing things that help you be more efficient and save you money. Maybe having some employees work from home will be an "employee benefit" to them or future employees when hiring.
 - h. Constantly check on social distancing compliance. This may be the one most important thing to know its effectiveness and probably the hardest or most overlooked thing to evaluate.



What will directly affect my opening?

1. Dates
 - a. When the government says I can open.
 - b. Tourism/travel-will there be enough people around
2. Visitors/Customers
 - a. Loyal customers most likely to come back first, then maybe, new customers
 - b. Members/"regulars" can help drive attendance by sharing their experience, building trust
 - c. Fear factor-at risk customers not likely to visit
3. Capacity
 - a. 6 foot separation-not possible in some places, drastically reduces capacity for customers
 - b. 150 square feet per guest/customer

4. Government

- a. International and national travel restrictions
- b. Restrictions on your supply chain may affect you dramatically
- c. State and local rules

5. Cost

- a. Supplies and disinfecting
- b. Extra staff for new tasks
- c. Increase in supplies due to supply chain shut downs

6. Liability

- a. At this time there is no protection for business owners who follow the guidelines against someone making a complaint and suing over getting sick at your facility. This is a big issue and has been brought to the attention of legislators. You will have risk and the accompanying attorney fees.
- b. There is no business liability insurance that will protect you from a pandemic or a virus.

7. Employees

- a. Additional \$600 per week is sometimes more than they will make working for you.
- b. Some will have daycare issues, especially with school closed.
- c. Some are taking care of family members who are sick.
- d. Some are afraid to get sick or have medical issues that increase their risks.



Precautions

You all know the basic precautions you are going to have to take. Use the State of CT guide from the governor's office as your tool. But start thinking of these things in terms of additional costs to your business. They may eat away at your profit margin.

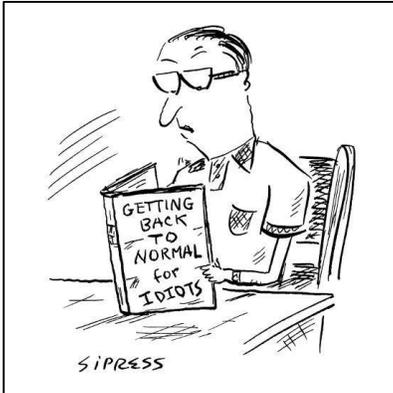
1. Sanitizing

- a. Soap/hand sanitizer in:
 - i. All restrooms
 - ii. All common areas and break rooms
 - iii. All conference and meeting rooms
 - iv. All workspaces
 - v. All entrances and exits
 - vi. Different parts of your store
- b. Sanitizing surfaces such as (just a sample):
 - i. Bathroom doors, handles, faucets
 - ii. Entrance doors
 - iii. Light switches
 - iv. Equipment such as copiers, fax machines, phones
 - v. Desks, counters, chairs, tables
 - vi. Cars, steering wheels, carts, wheelbarrows
 - vii. Merchandise—this one can be tricky, do your best to have staff handle as much as possible and not each customer.
 - viii. Floors, railings

2. Personal Protective Equipment

- a. Masks, gloves, goggles/glasses, gowns
- b. Partitions in workspace or registers
- c. Industry specific equipment
- d. Training for your employees on proper use, care and disposal—even for the simple things.

3. Social Distancing-6 feet distance between customers
 - a. Less capacity for customers
 - b. Inability to do some of your company's tasks or services
 - c. Special accommodations for the elderly and children
 - d. Software to accommodate meetings or take the place of travel
 - e. Transportation of employees (may need to take separate vehicles)



We know this “getting back to normal” is going to happen in phases. General principles that should be followed throughout all phases of re-opening:

1. Always follow federal, state and local guidelines, including health department
2. Provide clear guidance with each phase to your customers, employees and supply chain and set reasonable expectations for everyone.
3. Seek out your industry/trade groups for industry specific guidance relative to your business.
4. Create and maintain an organizational strategy for workforce contact tracing following any employee testing positive for COVID, should it be necessary.



OK, Sooooooo-- you are going to open. Now what?

Think of these phases as YOUR opening business phases, not government phases.

BE PATIENT, BE FLEXIBLE!

1. Phase 1-Before opening
 - a. Train staff on new procedures and how to observe people. They will be the ones that will have to remind people of social distancing, for example.
 - b. Use “reduced hours” to offer professional development with rewards.
 - c. Do all the things you always wanted to do in your place but did not have the time—organize your drawers, label your drawers, go through and get rid of your drawers, build some drawers.
 - d. Get everyone on board. This is the time to make sure all your staff has the same message to give customers. Not messages about face masks. But messages about why your company is so special, why your employees are the best, your service and products are unique and not reproducible anywhere else.
2. Phase 2-Honoring and thanking
 - a. Start with honoring and thanking your customers, clients, members, employees.
 - b. Service loyal customers first before the general public
 - c. Create controlled groups to boost confidence and trust—invite only events, open days for seniors.
 - d. Operational opening—only open parts of your business where you can make a profit. You don't have to open everything at once. Maybe a salon is appointment only, no walk-ins.
 - e. This may be the only time you can give your customers a really VIP treatment. With less customers you can spend more time making them feel special. Give them a donut and a fresh

cup of coffee on the house. Or maybe an extra 5 minute foot massage. Send them away with a coupon for the next visit because they were loyal and supported your business.

- f. Make your “mistakes” now, with those who love and trust you, and will understand and forgive you. They will be the “aunt” who always tells you there is lettuce in your teeth, or your jeans are getting tighter-and then hugs you.
- g. Don’t blend in or be a part of the noise of your community’s grand opening. Investing in marketing now only has you competing with a million others. Wait until Phase 4 when your voice will stand out in the crowd.

3. Phase 3-The soft opening

- a. Limit the general public, maybe a “new customer day”. As restrictions decrease, invite more of the general public into your facility.
- b. This allows you to prepare your staff for their new duties or procedures. Give them time to get used to the “new normal” without too much pressure.
- c. Guest feedback is crucial. Use it to adjust, make changes, communicate better to the public.

4. Phase 4-Grand Re-Opening

- a. Invest in an advertising campaign to invite the general public to “business as usual”
- b. Re-brand your business, tell them why you are important, and why you were worth the wait.
- c. Have a response plan in case the conditions change so you can quickly react to situations.



IMPORTANT! Be prepared for the press. In some locations there is much debate about re-opening any business. Be prepared for them to show up to your place with a camera and start asking you questions. Make sure you have appointed your spokesperson. Listen to the news so that you are aware of the “issue of the day” and you can prepare appropriate responses. Rehearse your answers to some of these questions:

Why did you decide to re-open?

What is your capacity or attendance policy?

How are you watching out for the safety of your customers and employees?

What changes have you made to your procedures or the way you do things?

How do you test your employees to see if they are sick?

What do you do if a customer does not want to follow your rules?

How often are you cleaning things, your cash register, credit card machine?



It the Chamber’s mission to help all businesses be more successful. We are here for you as a resource, a guide, a mentor, and in some cases your shrink. Lots of tears have been shed over the past several months, lots of anger, frustration, confusion, annoyance and downright intolerance of the situation.

You are not alone.

We know, we have talked to hundreds of you during this time.

Please take a moment to make sure you are getting our newsletters. We work very hard at getting you information that is accurate, vetted and as soon as possible. Thanks goes to our business partners: SBA, SBDC, WBDC, CEDF, SCORE, CLICK, USDA, State of CT.



Here are some resources to help you with planning!

President of the USA:

[POTUS: GUIDELINES OPENING UP AMERICA](#)
[FEDERAL GOVT COVID RESPONSE](#)

State of CT:

[CT CORONAVIRUS INFO](#)
[CT COVID EXECUTIVE ORDERS](#)
[CT ARTS & CULTURE GUIDELINES](#)

Center for Disease Control:

[CDC: COVID 19 INFO](#)
[CDC: FACE MASKS](#)
[CDC: CLEANING & DISINFECTING](#)
[CDC: HANDWASHING](#)
[CDC: USING PPE](#)
[CDC: SOCIAL DISTANCING](#)
[CDC: COMMUNICATION TOOLS](#)
[CDC: SYMPTOMS OF COVID](#)
[CDC: IF YOU ARE SICK](#)
[CDC: HAND SANITIZER](#)
[CDC: TRAVEL GUIDELINES](#)

Occupational Safety and Health Administration:

[OSHA: PREPARING WORKPLACES FOR COVID](#)
[OSHA: COVID 19](#)
[OSHA: GUIDANCE FOR SPECIFIC INDUSTRIES](#)
[OSHA: PREVENT WORKER EXPOSURE TO COVID-ENGLISH](#)
[OSHA: PREVENT WORKER EXPOSURE TO COVID-SPANISH](#)

Health and Human Services:

[HHS: ENFORCEMENT DISCRETION](#)
[HHS: CIVIL RIGHTS, HIPAA, COVID](#)
[HHS: WAIVER OF HIPAA](#)
[HHS: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS](#)

Food and Drug Administration:

[FDA: HAND SANITIZER](#)
[FDA: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS](#)

Great business plans for re-opening after COVID:

[KROGER FOOD & DRUG](#)
[US CHAMBER: GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS](#)
[US CHAMBER: COMBATING COVID](#)
[CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD RECOVERY READINESS](#)