
- Advertisement -

In the Trenches: Prepare to convert to the post COVID-19 reformed standard

May 8, 2020



A friend and I were reminiscing about our high school and Army memories. As we recalled some of those experiences, I started thinking about the future and how we would subsequently be musing over the current COVID-19 crisis. What will we recollect about it?

Perhaps the conversation will be about closed businesses, work stoppage, job losses, panic buying and especially all the fatalities. COVID-19 will surely be a sad discussion and a topic for many years into the future.

Of course, time moves on, and with time comes change, particularly to the food industry, which will be altered in many ways. If we're all smart, we will learn from COVID-19.

When COVID-19 ebbs and we all emerge from our underground shelters, what's on the agenda to convert to the reformed standard? I say reformed because business operations will change. Working conditions will change. Procedures will change. People and habits will change, and the reformed standard will become the reshaping of society as people try to adjust themselves in their dissimilar daily lives.

Now is the time to start planning how you will reopen your business to its newer standard once the all-clear signal is given. Undoubtedly, we will have to learn and follow strict workplace health and safety procedures.

Some of the protective ways we've been dealing with during this hiatus will probably be rolled over into a different work and lifestyle environment.

Here are a few areas to think about:

- Staying at home. With restaurants closed and only allowed to offer take-out food, more

people learned to cook their own meals. Many individuals will continue to carry out that activity. Eating at home could possibly become more commonplace.

- Working at home. The remote workforce may have worked well for companies and was better than expected. It could lead to a partial adaptation.
- Face masks. A great number of people may not want to give them up including in the workplace. Only time will unmask fear of the airborne germs.
- Social distancing. Offices may possibly be rearranged to maintain gaps between workers, with desks further apart, meeting room seating with distancing, floor signs for distancing at the copy machine and other alternate work practices.
- Sales rep visits. Calling on buyers face-to-face is still the best way to sell goods to retailers. But many retailers may place a pause on that practice for the time being. Airline travel could also be a bit apprehensive by some companies and their reps.
- Packaging. The method of displaying fresh produce in bags and packages could increase immensely if consumers feel paranoid about others touching bulk product. Even though people know they should wash all produce before consumption, there could still be a certain fear from the after effect of COVID-19.
- Online shopping. There was a big surge in this area. Those who tried it for the first time may stick to it. That means companies will be updating and expanding items on their websites accordingly.
- Online communicating. Video conferencing, webinars, virtual meetings and other technological means played a huge role in social distancing. Online educating by schools and colleges was put into place during the virus pandemic. It could breed.
- Hand shaking. Elbow tapping may become the new handshake. Can you just imagine ballplayers hitting homeruns and tapping elbows afterwards? It may even be safer than jumping and banging into each other.
- Grocery stores. Self-serve salad bars, soups and hot foods may have to be modified for health and safety reasons. Sneeze guards and Plexiglas may not be fully sufficient to protect shoppers.

Let's be clear, there is always light at the end of the tunnel. But the claws of COVID-19 will have a long-lasting impact on our social lives. It will change former routines.

One thing is for certain — if you never embraced change, you will now.

Ron Pelger is the owner of RonProCon, a produce industry advisory firm. He is also a produce industry merchandising director and a freelance writer. He can be contacted at 775-843-2394 or by e-mail at ronprocon@gmail.com.

[Print](#)