



# BUILDING CONSUMER TRUST

A guide built by Grayling Main Street/DDA to assist small businesses with response and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.



## INTRODUCTION:

Seemingly no one was prepared for the challenges presented by the Covid-19 health crisis, least of all the disruption it has caused in the economy. It has changed our personal and professional lives. However, this offers us a unique opportunity to evaluate our business' general practices and potentially create more prosperous models. What lessons have we learned during this pandemic, and how can we apply them to our daily professional lives?

As businesses reopen, customers may not feel comfortable dining in restaurants or lingering in coffee shops, there may be hesitation with interacting and touching merchandise, even completing transactions with credit card machines and cash could pose new concerns. Your success and viability depend on understanding how your customers' needs and concerns have changed following this pandemic.

To assist you in meeting these needs and managing concerns, Grayling Main Street/DDA has compiled this Trust Kit to help you be better informed and ready to welcome back your customers in a safe and comfortable way. We hope this kit will aid in reinforcing the trust your customers have in your business, and to nurture that trust into the future.

## PUBLIC SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:

In preparation of the lifting of the Governor's Stay-At-Home Order, Grayling MainStreet/DDA created an 18 questions survey that engaged consumers in finding the best ways to serve them and create a comfortable experience, as restrictions are lifted. The survey was conducted over 2 weeks (primarily on social media) and 193 people provided feedback.

Below, is the data received from the surveys as of 20 May 2020:

- 87% of respondents indicated they will feel comfortable returning to local businesses.
- 69% of respondents indicated they will feel comfortable returning to dine-in experiences.
- 82% of respondents indicated they will feel comfortable returning to in-person meetings for services other than retail and dining.
- When asked how quickly respondents would return to dining out, shopping in retail locations, and meeting for services:
  - 48% said immediately
  - 21% said within a few weeks
  - 6% said within a few months
  - 16% said they were unsure
  - 8% provided various other timelines and variables that would influence their return
- When asked to consider shopping methods, upon reopen, respondents provided the following:
  - 18% would like to continue to have an online ordering and mailing option
  - 35% would like to continue to have a curb-side pick-up option for orders placed online or over the phone
  - 76% would prefer to return to shopping in the store
  - Several respondents voiced their desire to see outdoor/sidewalk sales.
- 77% of respondents told us that plexiglass barriers at checkouts will not influence shopping decisions
- 60% of respondents would like small businesses to limit the number of customers in the store.
- When asked to consider dining methods, upon reopen, respondents provided the following:
  - 54% would like to dine-in
  - 28% would like to see a reservation system implemented
  - 18% would like to see curbside pick or carry out only options
  - 12% of respondents indicated a combination of dine-in and curbside/carry out
  - Several responses indicated their comfort with dining in is dependent on the restaurant adhering to distancing measures between tables, as well as offering outdoor/open air dining sections.
- 88% of respondents would like to see curbside service remain as option for restaurant following reopening.
- 54% of respondents expect business staff to wear face masks.
- 60% of respondents are comfortable with minor increases to product cost, to offset the implementation of safety precautions.
- 70% of respondents would like to see an increase in "touch-free" payment options.



- The survey asked 4 open-ended questions, below is a review of the predominant responses:
  - The majority of respondents indicated their biggest concerns in currently open establishments were employees lacking, or improperly using personal protective equipment (masks and gloves).
  - Some respondents indicated they are averse to businesses that require them to wear a mask while in the establishment, and are ready for things to be back to, “the old way.”
  - Several respondents noted discomfort with a lack of enforcement to social distancing guidelines for both customers and employees.
  - Many respondents indicated they liked the spacing markers in areas where lines form.
  - A majority of respondents would feel most comfortable if businesses: 1) added sanitation stations (hand sanitizer) near entrances, 2) restricted the number of patrons in establishments and/or spaced tables further away from each other, and 3) saw increased cleaning and sanitization of high touch areas while shopping or dining.

## GENERAL BEST PRACTICES:

This section includes a compilation of recommendations that can be implemented by most business types. Each of these ideas and concepts has been carefully considered and are simple to begin implanting, as we navigate the new normal. They may not all be for you and your business, and some may require more focus than you can spare right now. That is okay. We understand everything is upside down and backwards right now. Therefore, we hope these will help you to straighten a few thoughts out.

**Make sure your online listings are up to date:** Take this time to “Google” your business and see what you find. Verify your address, phone number, and hours of operation are correct. Don’t forget, Grayling Main Street has a business directory on their website, that is managed by the individual business owners. If you need help accessing your listing, please contact our office for more information.

**Leverage your Social Media:** Live videos can help you highlighting your personality, your business, and your products. This is a fun and simple way to remind consumers that there are real people behind the products and counters in small businesses. When selecting items to feature, be sure to track which products get the most attention. This could help you in deciding on a limited selection of online offering, to test the waters.

**Activate your online store:** Get your most popular items listed, and even gift cards! Check with the point of sale system you are currently using, to find out if they offer an online store option. Many, like Square and Clover are compatible with online sales. Other options that are user friendly include Weebly and Wix. These can be linked to your existing website and social media accounts to spread the word. If your website is managed by a contractor, or developer, contact them regarding online shopping and inventory option that can be added to your website as soon as possible. They may have streamlined services to get it up quickly, or be able to provide a step-by-step guide.



**Alternate Ordering Systems:** Answer the phone, check emails, and respond to online messages. Be prepared to take orders in non-traditional ways, and make it as easy as possible for customers. This is particularly important if you do not have an online ordering system. Know the cost of flat rate boxes, so if a customer requests a package be mailed you can quickly respond with shipping rates.

**Hours and Days of Operation:** Evaluate how you want traffic to flow in your business. During this time, and as we transition to what is next, it might be worth considering expanding your hours of operations, as well as identifying times for high-risk clients, by-appointment only hours, unrestricted shopping times, and a curbside pick-up schedule. You do not have to have everyone in the business at the same time, or try to be everywhere at once.

**Continue Visible Business-wide Sanitation Measures:** Make a schedule for sanitizing high touch areas (pin-pads, door handles, check-out counter, etc.), post it, and adhere to it – no matter what! If you get a little surge of guests, don't be afraid to do an extra run down the list between scheduled times. Customers are unlikely to complain if you have to step away for a minute, to make sure the space you are sharing is clean and safe for everyone. If you require signatures for credit cards have separate bins for sanitized and recently used pens on the counter top. Keep a small pail of disinfectant solution (water and bleach, Clorox wipes, sanitizer spray) at the register, before turning the screen to the customer for a signature, give it a quick wipe.

**Masks, gloves, and shields:** Wear a face mask. Wear gloves when appropriate. If you choose to use PPE, make sure to use it properly. Cash is undoubtedly unclean, be sure to use hand sanitizer after every cash exchange, or change gloves if you are wearing them. Consider installing a plexiglass shield at your register. There are several Michigan businesses already producing these.

**Hands-Free Payment:** Consider implementing contactless payment options. Contactless – also known as “tap” payments allow customers to put a smartphone or credit/debit card with the technology near a contactless-enabled device, instead of swiping or inserting a card into the PIN pad. Popular forms of contactless payments include Apple Pay, Google Pay and Samsung Pay. This will help customers reduce contact with commonly used surfaces like PIN pads. If you still offer credit card readers etc. that require a PIN, make sure to wipe these surfaces down after every use.

**Infrared Thermometers:** Some businesses may begin to check temperatures at the door before employees enter.

**Mark spaces on the floor:** This simple measure will help customers see that your business is practicing social distancing, in an effort to keep fellow customers, and staff, safe, healthy, and comfortable. Grayling Main Street is currently working to secure some destination branded resources to assist with this, at a discounted rate. Please feel free to give us a call for more information.

**Controlled Employee Shifts:** By having controlled shifts you can ensure you aren't mixing different workers on different shifts. That way, if one person on the shift gets exposed, it doesn't potentially require that you shut down your entire business.

## **FOOD/BEVERAGE BUSINESS CHANGES:**

Dining is going to look a little different for a little while. Here are some recommendations for reopening and adjusting to the various comfort level of patrons you might encounter:

**Continue Curbside Pick-up & Delivery:** Grayling Main Street and the City of Grayling are working to coordinate some dedicated Curbside/To-Go parking spots, to increase the ease of this process.

**Move Tables Further Apart:** Social distancing practices and the gradual re-opening measures will likely translate, at least temporarily and possibly longer-term, to a 30% to 50% reduction in your occupancy limits. Space out tables and open up the flow so customers can still practice social distancing.

**Add sidewalk/parklet seating:** Outdoor seating can help offset the decreased seating capacity indoors. Grayling Main Street and the City of Grayling are working to create a policy to safely expand outdoor seating.

**Disposable menus:** Try disposable recyclable menus, or consider the increased use of menu boards (static and digital) and menu apps.

**Packaged (plastic sealed) utensils w/ sanitary hand wipes:** While not the most eco-friendly, for a couple months, offering these types of packaged utensils can help cut-down on germs and make your customers feel more at ease.

**Grab & Go Growlers:** Customers who love your specialty brewed products could pull up to the curb or your backdoor to get a growler of their favorite brew after submitting their order and payment online/over the phone.

**Reservation System:** If your restaurant offers reservations, you may rely on this system more now than ever, to limit occupancy and crowds in your establishment.

**Limits on number of people in waiting areas:** To cut down on groups of patrons huddled together waiting for a table, close your waiting areas and ask customers to wait outside or in vehicles.



## RETAILERS:

**VIP/special invite/RSVP limited attendance soft openings:** Special events like these can help you welcome back customers, experiment with changes and collect customer feedback/suggestions.

**Sidewalk Sales:** Consider moving your shop to the sidewalk. Grayling ordinance already permits you to use space directly in front of your store for merchandise!

**Be a “personal shopper”:** Having one individual dedicated to walking around with a customer (from a safe distance of course) not only adds a special touch and “VIP feeling” to your customers, but also allows staff to know what items were touched and can help in cleaning items after the customer leaves.

**Customer Service is King:** Continue to provide top-notch customer service and help shoppers remember you are a real person, passionate about your business, and in a strange and uncertain time. Don't shy away from making personal connections. Keep being the reason your customers come through the door.

**Utilize open floor plans:** Use showroom and other merchandising techniques to create more open floor space. Make sure you have wide enough aisle and accessible products. Sometimes this mean stocking less on the floor than usual, so you may be needing to make more runs to the stock room.

## SERVICE INDUSTRY BUSINESSES:

**Spacing:** It may sound over-simplified or simple, but following this health crisis, everyone is going to want, and need more space to feel comfortable. Whether its your salon chairs, yoga mats, or nail tech tables – consider spacing customers and employees further apart. Alternate which chairs you are using and have clear sanitation practices established (and implemented). If you only need documentation signed have a space, possibly with a separate entrance, dedicated to just that. Consider getting secure drop-boxes for no touch delivery of paperwork and payments.

**Virtual Meetings:** Continue to use, or activate the use of, virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, Skype, GoTo Meetings, and Google Hang-outs, whenever possible. Now is a wonderful time to consider what interactions can be held in a virtual space or over the phone. Could that meeting have been an email?

**Continuation of work-at-home trends/Staggered shifts:** Consider staggering staff in the office, and allowing staff to work from home as often as possible. We highly recommend setting expectations and a matrix for evaluation for work-from-home periods.

## **ARTS & CULTURAL/ATTRACTION-BASED BUSINESSES:**

**Go Virtual:** Offer virtual tours of your gallery. This will allow the public to support your organization as well as support local artists when your space has to limit crowds.

**Online classes:** Still offer a hands-on experience, create kits for classes that can be picked up and then host a live, or recorded, session on how to use the items in the kit.

**Outdoor Activities:** Consider make & take activities in small groups held in outdoor community spaces or parklets that will allow people to still feel a sense of community and enjoy beautiful Michigan weather days!

**Creative Re-Grand Opening/VIP Events:** The fact that your venue can now re-open is cause for celebration! Highlight local talent, get creative, and with RSVP requirements you can control crowds and spacing.

