



How to implement a successful post-COVID-19 return to work strategy.



As organizations begin calling staff back to the workplace, HR business leaders need to navigate the complexity of re-integrating their workforce and essential workers into their offices and facilities safely and securely.

In a global economy where organizations have operations around the globe with distributed workforces and uncertainty of the future of workplace safety, HR professionals need to consider progressive approaches for developing a holistic talent strategy and agile work culture in the era of COVID-19 and beyond.

Looking ahead, HR business leaders will need to adapt their protective measures that ensure employee and visitor health and well-being, safeguard operations, and ensure business continuity. This must be at the forefront of every employer's return-to-work strategy.

Read this ebook to learn about flexible and safe workforce entry solutions to control facility access, manage capacity loads, and screen facility entrants to reduce your organization's risk and help bring your workforce back to your office or facility with safety and confidence.





In this ebook we explore:

- Current and future measures for advancing duty of care measures for employees and contingent workforces.
- New safety and compliance considerations to help organizations prepare and support their workforces for the future.
- Recommendations for working with the right solution partners for building organizational resilience.





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COVID-19 and the future of the workplace.

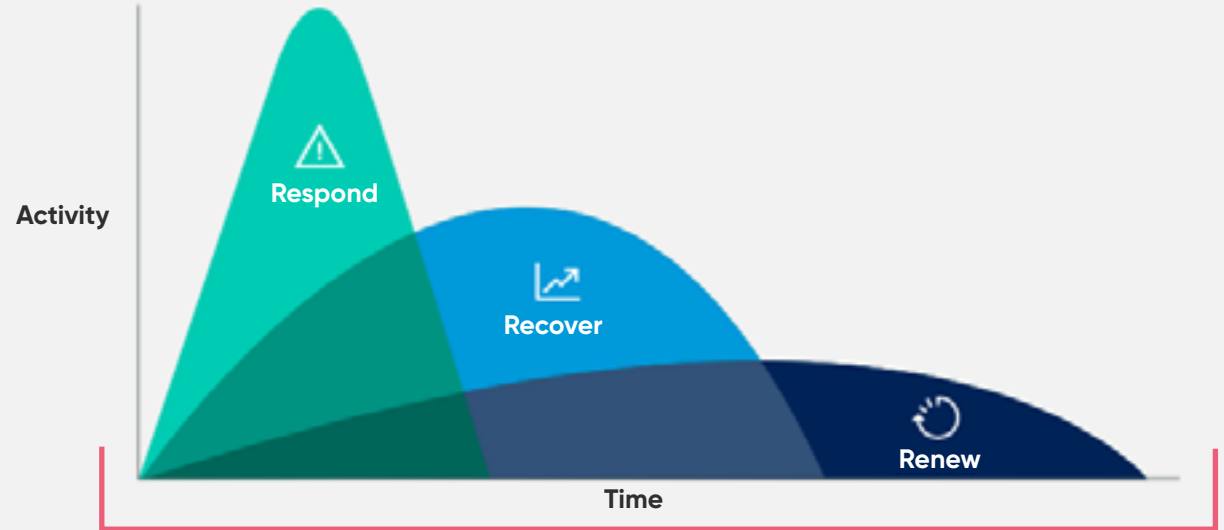
COVID-19 has significantly altered daily life for most people around the globe. The workplace, in particular, has undergone major and rapid change in response to social distancing measures that required the physical relocation of employees from the office to remote work-from-home environments.

The workplace and the progression of the pandemic

Throughout the pandemic, HR leaders have been looked towards for expertise in mitigating the challenges of the changed workplace. According to Gartner, the pandemic has and will continue to progress through three major phases: respond, recover, renew. For HR leaders and their organizations, each phase poses distinct challenges by way of finding solutions that balance workforce safety with the realities of ensuring business continuity.



Pandemic progression.



During the initial 'respond' phase, HR leaders and organizations saw the rapid decentralization of their workplace as employees and other workers were quickly mobilized to remote working environments.

The world is now cautiously entering the 'recovery' phase as vaccines become more readily available. Excitingly, this recovery phase is now offering the promise of the return to the physical workforce.

Getting there, however, will require strategic and unprecedented thinking that reshapes the workplace into an agile environment that can adeptly protect employee and visitor safety, today and into the post-COVID-19 future.

Creating a safe and secure workplace return for everyone



The pandemic has taught organizations around the world the vulnerability of the workplace as we know it. The communicative nature of the COVID-19 virus has underpinned the reality that no organization is an island unto itself, but is in fact a very connected member of society that relies upon the safety of not only itself but also its neighbors in order to survive.

Looking ahead, and with this connected mindset engaged, organizations will be required to adopt strategies that seek to

not only protect itself, its physical environment, and workers, but also those that contribute to the greater safety of the public at large.

In a recent survey we conducted with 300 US-based enterprise organizations, nearly 40% of respondents noted that they plan to reach 75% of their staff in-office or in-facility by the summer of 2021.





Return to work motivations

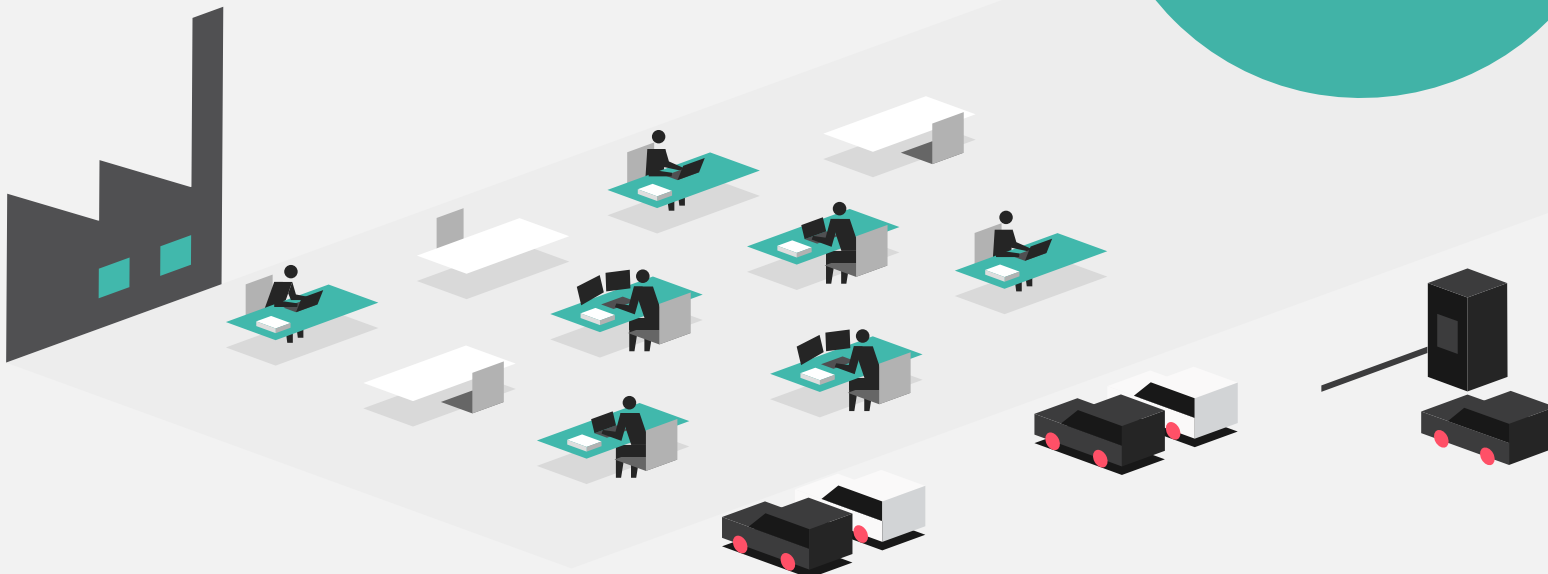
The motivations for returning to on-site work varies for businesses depending on their core service and function. For many in manufacturing and utilities, the motivation will be to get back to full operational capacity in order to resume full production levels – which we will likely see in the near future but with significant shifts to pre-pandemic work processes and practices.

Knowledge-based environments, on the other hand, will primarily be motivated to return to work in order to facilitate soft skill areas (such as culture, collaboration, mentorship, and coaching) that were largely missing during the pandemic.

38.3% of employers plan to have 75% in-office capacity by Summer 2021.

75%

Office capacity





Post-pandemic work models

According to research by Forrester, organizations vary on the types of workplace models they anticipate adopting. While many organizations (30%) anticipate returning their full staff to the workplace, the majority (60%) anticipate adopting a hybrid model that allows for a mix of in-office and remote work scenarios. A further 10% of organizations anticipate a fully remote-work model going forward.

Regardless of the model selected, employee engagement will be critical during the re-entry process to ensure staff are well-informed about the new office practices and understand how to carry them out in order to ensure their safety as well as that of their colleagues.

For re-entry ideas, [McKinsey suggests](#) organizations considering a return to the office look towards the safety practices implemented by essential organizations, such as hospitals, grocery stores, and gas stations. Throughout the pandemic, these organizations have remained open and functional and can offer some great insight for businesses wishing to resume office and facility operations while keeping employees and visitors safe.

Back to the office	Office + anywhere hybrid	Mostly anywhere
30%	60%	10%
Amazon, Netflix, L'Oréal	Siemens, Pinterest, Dell	Twitter, GitLab
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritizes a “face-time” culture• Takes advantage of falling real-estate prices• Signals to workers what kind of work the company will reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 10% of employees work at least two days a week in anywhere mode• Doesn't have to be the same 10% each week• Requires clear policies for who can work from anywhere and how often• Must clearly determine where new hires fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires senior-level commitment• Has a dedicated HR leader• Attracts specific talent

Source: Forrester Research, Inc. Unauthorized reproduction, citation, or distribution prohibited.

Duty of care in the new norm.

Now that we've covered a bit about the evolution of the pandemic and some considerations for the future of the workplace, let's take a look at the concept of 'duty of care' and how it applies to the workplace context.

By definition, duty of care is the obligation of an organization to assume responsibility for protecting its employees from risks and threats while working and is widely protected within the legislation of many countries.





Duty of care covers many things under its umbrella, including mental health.

Beneath the duty of care umbrella

Many items are covered under the duty of care umbrella and include health and safety, corporate compliance, adherence to government regulations, and social responsibility to name a few.

As a result of COVID-19, there will likely be some gaps between acceptable pre-pandemic levels of duty of care and the levels that will be necessary upon return to the workplace. Traditionally, many organizations have looked at duty of care programs as too great an expense to fully implement. But in the wake of COVID-19, perspectives are greatly shifting as organizations are now realizing the risk of avoiding duty of care strategies is far too great to carry on any longer.

Consider for example what would happen if a manufacturing facility did not implement a re-entry strategy and as a result, an employee got ill with COVID-19. With no re-entry and safety protocols in place, the entire facility would need to go into immediate closure, resulting in enormous losses to the employer.

Volkswagen experienced this firsthand when a COVID-19 outbreak in one of its facilities forced the entire factory to be closed. As a result, CEO Herbert Dies said the business lost roughly \$2.2 billion per week while production was shut down.



Looking ahead, effective duty of care programs will not only be essential in terms of keeping production running, but it will also be an essential part of the overall employee retention strategy.

Unfortunately, many organizations continue to lag behind in adopting new duty of care programs to address the new realities of COVID-19. In fact, in a survey we recently conducted with 1,000 employees from 300 enterprises, 43% of employees report their company has yet to introduce technologies to ensure health and safety since the pandemic started. Further, one-third of employees noted they will explore new jobs or resign if their employer fails to create a safe in-office work environment amid COVID-19.

It's important to note that employee communication is a critical component of any duty of care program. Without proper communication, employees will fail to understand the measures that have been taken to keep them safe and may choose to leave an employer assuming their workplace is no longer safe in the COVID-19 era.

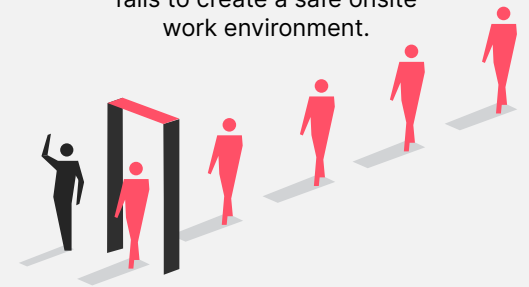
Going forward, employers will need to become hyper vigilant in their employee communication programs in order to highlight the actions they've taken to protect employee safety. This will include the adoption of holistic strategies that go above and beyond pre-pandemic communication practices, and seek to keep not only employees hyper informed but also the community at large.

Employers have the choice to either COVID-proof their offices now or risk losing employees.



90.6%

of employees would take action if if their employer fails to create a safe onsite work environment.



30.7%

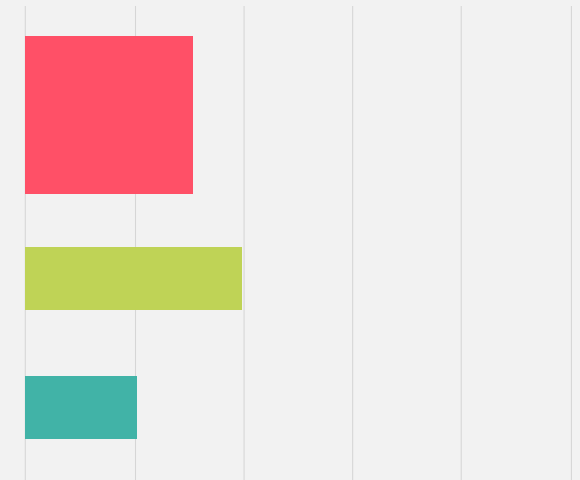
One third would explore new employment opportunities or resign

39.5%

Over a third would raise concerns to authorities or labor unions

20.4%

Over 20% would consider legal action



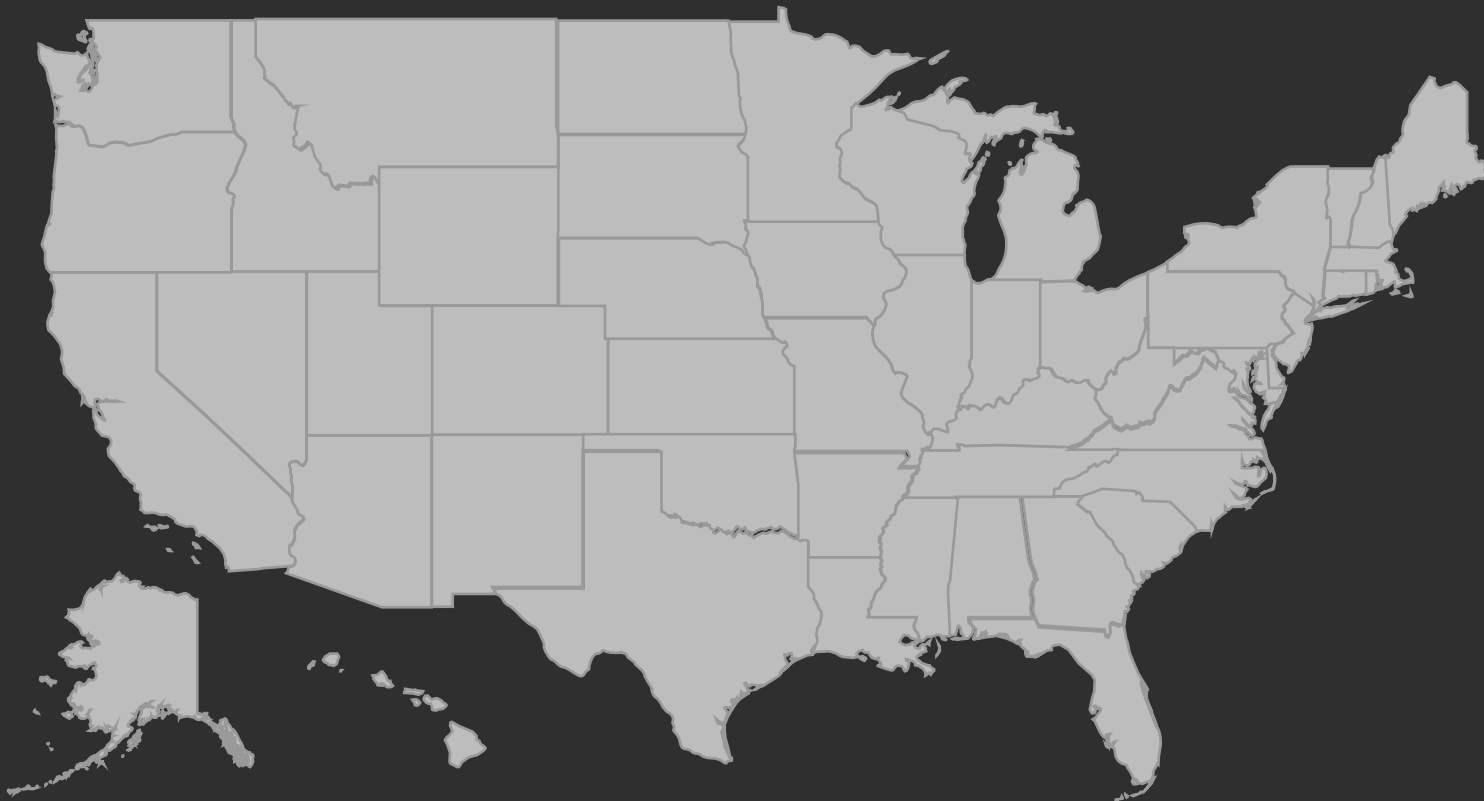
Source: <https://try.tractionquest.com/infographic/2020return-to-work-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-study>



The evolving compliance landscape.

For HR leaders and organizations, one of the greatest challenges presented by the pandemic is the constantly evolving compliance landscape it has created. Understanding and staying on top of governmental compliance regulations has become an enormous undertaking for teams trying to ensure they're providing their staff with the appropriate care within their jurisdiction.

Traction Guest created a [COVID Compliance Requirements](#) tool to help employers and HR leaders stay informed with accurate and up-to-date compliance information. Providing requirements and recommendations for every state, the tool is intended to serve as a one-stop resource to help employers accurately create a safe working environment that's in step with local regulations.





The path to a safe re-entry.

Let's now look at the steps organizations can take to help their employees get safely back-to-work.

First step: build a team

To begin with, we recommend that organizations and HR leaders formulate an internal team tasked with overseeing COVID-19 safety processes. This team should include a diversity of leaders from across all organizational departments in order to form a holistic approach to safe re-entry, including those from:

- Business leadership
- HR
- Environment Health and Safety (EHS)
- Operations
- Real Estate & Facilities
- Finance
- Legal
- Technology
- Workplace Strategy
- Procurement
- Security & Crisis Management
- Communications





Second step: arm yourself with tools

Next, we recommend that organizations familiarize themselves with the various technologies available that can help with the re-entry process – including those for risk and crisis, customer experience, employee experience, and health and safety such as:



Risk and crisis management technologies

- Business continuity planning software
- Crisis management and communication platforms
- Environmental, health, and safety (EHS) management platforms
- Risk intelligence — financial viability ratings
- Supply chain mapping solutions
- Whistleblower solutions



Customer experience technologies

- Chatbots
- Customer feedback management platforms
- Open mapping platforms
- Social listening platforms
- Transactional content management
- Webcasting



Employee experience and human capital management technologies

- Learning experience platforms
- SaaS cloud content platforms
- Team collaboration solutions
- Videoconferencing
- Virtual desktop infrastructure
- Workforce analytics



Health and safety technologies

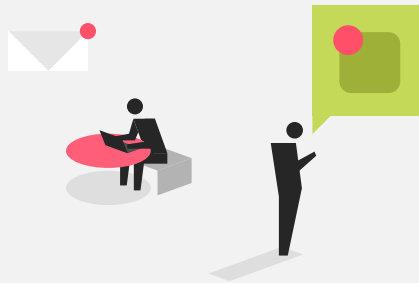
- Contact tracing solutions
- Health status monitoring
- Onsite clinician services
- Social distancing surveillance
- Touchless fever screening
- Virtual mental healthcare



Third step: implement end-to-end re-entry solutions

Lastly, organizations will need to implement end-to-end solutions and practices that cover the full re-entry experience. This includes pre-entry protocol, such as allowing entry on an invite-only basis and on-site entry practices, such as touchless check-in.

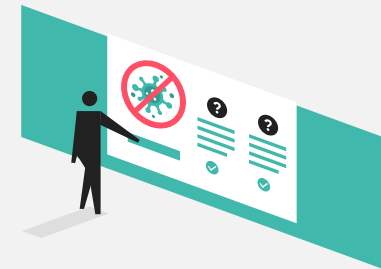
1 Invite-first



2 Registration & communication



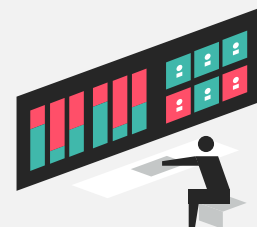
3 Health compliance checklist



4 Touchless check-in



5 Real time data updates



6 Communications/ analytics (post visit)





HR leaders

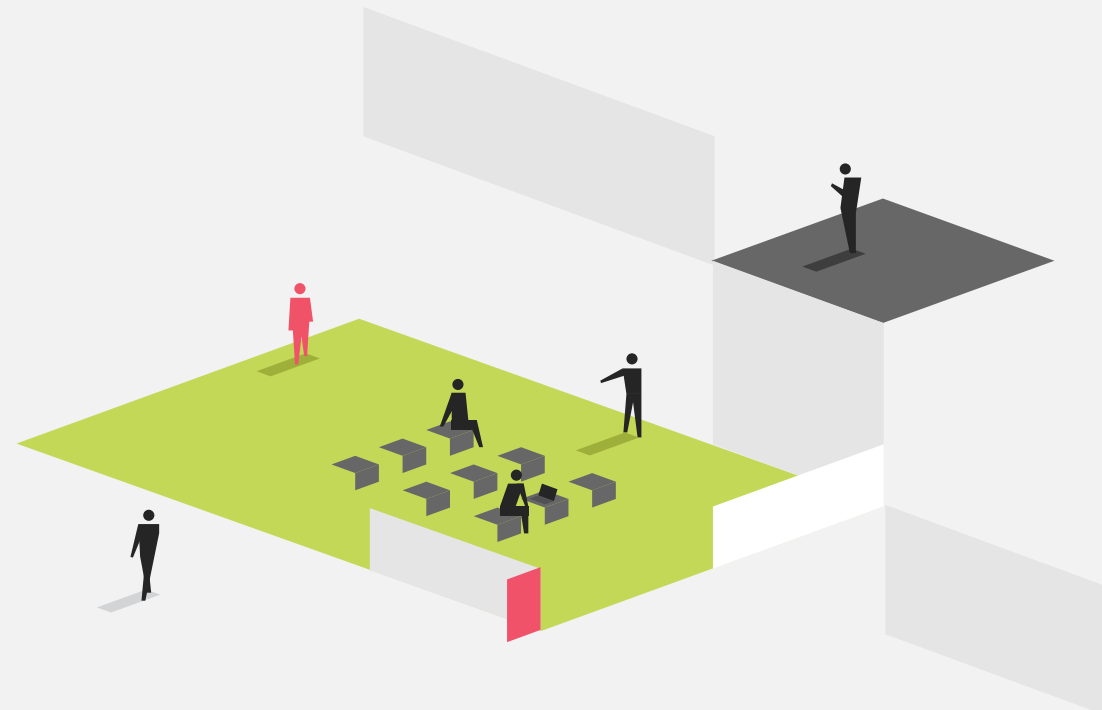
Employee and visitor check-in/out systems **66.7%** and invitation/scheduling tools **50%**

Heads of security

Employee and visitor check-in/out systems **40%** invitations/scheduling tools **40%** and contact tracing tools **40%**

C-level executives

Employee and visitor check-in/out systems **70.3%** and security access control systems, such as a door lock keypad or other security system that is required upon entry **68.8%**



Summary.

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically altered the workplace as we know it for the foreseeable future. For some organizations, the impact has resulted in a complete and permanent shift to remote-work. Meanwhile, others are considering a hybrid model that blends remote and on-site work or a complete return of staff to the on-site workplace.

In fact, according to recent Traction Guest research, some 38.3% of employers plan to have 75% in-office capacity by summer 2021. However, many employees are concerned about returning to work with nearly 25% of employees stating they don't feel confident about their employer's approach to screening individuals for COVID19.

Within this new environment, demonstrating heightened duty of care for employee safety is of utmost importance to today's organizations. Without such effort, teams risk losing their valuable employees to safer work environments, potential legal action, and major losses due to facility shutdowns resulting from on-site COVID-19 outbreaks.

About Traction Guest.

Traction Guest, the leader in enterprise visitor management, empowers businesses across five continents and dozens of industries to make on-site experiences for employees and visitors safe, secure and effortless.

Today, global brands rely on the low-code, globally scalable platform to deliver unparalleled security across multiple entry points, protecting their guests, facilities and data.

