



Think ahead.

Hygiene expectations have increased – what does this mean for your office?





NEARLY
50%

of people have higher expectations of hygiene in the workplace post the pandemic.³



Impacts of the Pandemic and Increase in Hygiene Expectations

The onset of the pandemic brought with it a “new normal”. Most employees found themselves in a situation where working from home was the only viable option, and mental health, job satisfaction, as well as job motivation levels, were negatively impacted as a consequence.

According to recent research, for employees that are working from home job satisfaction has reduced from 57% to 32% and job motivation from 56% to 36%. The same research also revealed that whilst before the pandemic, 62% of employees had reported positive mental health, as the pandemic continues that number has dipped to an alarming 28%.¹

In order to help restore employee satisfaction, motivation, and positive mental health, it is crucial that organisations and businesses work towards securing the safe return of their employees back to the office.

One of the starkest factors that the pandemic has made evident is that hygiene and cleanliness in all offices are absolutely pivotal for business looking to bring employees back to the office.

Awareness around the importance of hygiene has increased across the globe since the onset of the pandemic. Google released a list of the most-searched terms for the first six months of 2020 and the results were unsurprising. The top 20 search terms between January and June 2020 included words relating to new health phrases people have learned, social distancing and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and the effects of being told to stay at home — quarantine and social isolation.²

According to the same list, hand sanitisers topped three separate search categories in Australia. These search patterns reveal a clear rise in concerns around health and hygiene post the onset of the pandemic.

Research conducted on the implications of COVID-19 has shown that nearly 50% of people have higher expectations of hygiene in the workplace post the pandemic.³ People want to feel safe and secure when they are away from home and given that they spend a significant period of time at work, they understandably have high expectations for the standards of cleanliness at their workplace.

¹ Working From Home Is Disliked By And Bad For Most Employees, Say Researchers, Forbes, 2020.

² Here's What Australians Googled in the First Half of 2020 - Sarah Basford Canales, July 2020.

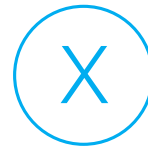
³ Essentials Initiative Survey 2020 – 2021, Implications of COVID-19.



Preventing the spread of germs and bacteria in the office

A large number of offices today are open plan, which means that people typically share workspaces - such as desks, meeting rooms, break rooms, as well as equipment - such as phones, computers and printers. The sharing of these spaces, whilst nice from a point of view of increasing cohesion and socialisation, can also be breeding grounds for the spread of germs and bacteria.

The lack of proper hygiene practices with regards to shared spaces and equipment in offices can cause the spread of infections like the flu, gastro, colds, and COVID-19. These illnesses can negatively impact job motivation, job satisfaction, as well as the mental and physical wellbeing of employees.



Increase in absenteeism due to sickness amongst employees

The spread of infections can also lead to an increase in absenteeism due to sickness and a decrease in productivity for individuals in any business. A survey published by the Australian Industry Group estimated that absenteeism directly costs organisations AUD \$578 per employee per day of absence. Moreover, the loss to the economy of indirect costs alone is said to be in excess of AUD \$44 billion per annum.⁴

Therefore, neglecting proper hygiene and sanitation can prove to be very costly for businesses. Additionally, it can also lead to a reduction in employee satisfaction, resulting in a detrimental impact to the overall work culture of an organisation.

A positive relationship exists between perceived cleanliness (i.e., the satisfaction with cleanliness of the office), and satisfaction with elements of work speed, volume and quantity, respectively.⁵ This means that businesses that implement high standards of cleanliness and hygiene for their staff can potentially see an increase in the quantity, volume and speed of their employees' performance.

⁴ The impact of COVID-19 on cultural tourism, Media International Australia, 2021.

⁵ The impact of COVID-19 on the airport business and the path to recovery, Airports Council International, 2021.

7 in 10 people use soap more frequently since the spread of COVID-19⁹ and 62% of people have started using sanitisers more frequently.¹⁰



Evolution of Hygiene Product Views since COVID-19

Recent research has revealed that views on hygiene products have changed since COVID-19. With 55% of people saying that they think paper hand towels are more hygienic than air dryers,⁶ the preference for the use of paper hand towels has markedly increased in comparison to the preference for jet air dryers. The same study also showed that 7 in 10 people wish facilities offer paper hand towels as an alternative to air dryers.⁷

Microbiologists compared jet air dryers to paper towels in a recent study and found that the jet air dryer dispersed over 190 times more viruses than paper towels.⁸ Therefore, the preference for paper towels is rational and should be accounted for.

The use of hygiene products has also seen a marked increase due to the pandemic. Research shows that 7 in 10 people use soap more frequently since the spread of COVID-19⁹ and 62% of people have started using sanitisers more frequently.¹⁰ These findings are in line with sales data from a report by Tork, which revealed that the sales volume of sanitisers and soaps were up by 15% in Australia and New Zealand.

⁶ Evolution of Hygiene Preferences Post COVID-19, Tork Survey 2021.
⁷ Evolution of Hygiene Preferences Post COVID-19, Tork Survey 2021. According to this survey, 38% of people felt air dryers took too long to dry their hands.
⁸ Evaluation of the potential for virus dispersal during hand drying: a comparison of three methods. J Appl Microbiol. 2016 Feb.

⁹ Evolution of Hygiene Preferences Post COVID-19, Tork Survey 2021.
¹⁰ Evolution of Hygiene Preferences Post COVID-19, Tork Survey 2021.



Combating Complacency in the Workplace

According to a survey, 40% of Australian office workers anticipate that their satisfaction while at work would rise if workplace hygiene improved.¹¹ In order to restore faith, improve satisfaction, and meet increased expectations around hygiene, businesses need to make visible upgrades to hygiene practices, and show staff, visitors and customers that they care about their health and well-being.

A recent article on preventing the spread of COVID-19 revealed that paradoxically, the best companies (i.e. the most successful and profitable organisations) seem to be at the greatest risk of succumbing to complacency.¹²

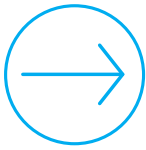
With the uncertainty that surrounds the spread of the pandemic, it is essential that businesses prevent and protect themselves from complacency. In order to restore face-to-face meetings and increase social interactions amongst teams and customers, organisations need to implement long term solutions and future-proof their businesses.

40%

of Australian office workers anticipate that their satisfaction while at work would rise if workplace hygiene improved.¹¹

¹¹ The Economic Impact of Office Hygiene, Initial.

¹² Now is not the time to be complacent, EHS Today, 2020.



The next steps towards securing the safe return of customers, staff and visitors to your venues and outlets

Identify the gaps within the current health and hygiene provisions:

- Conduct internal audits to identify the areas where improvements and solutions are required.
- Implement changes based on the results of the audit.
- Notify your employees of the measures that have been undertaken to improve hygiene at the office.

Implement immediate solutions for hygiene provisions that aren't functioning well post an audit:

- Fix any broken dispensers that are identified.
- Increase dispenser capacities, where required, to ensure products don't run out. This also saves staff time refilling dispensers and traveling to storerooms when products run out.
- Ensure inclusivity by installing dispensers that are easy to use for all employees, customers and visitors. In order to do so, look for dispensers with an "Easy to use" certification from companies that are working with the new [Design for All EN 17161 standards](#).
- Choose dispensers that are easy to clean and HACCP approved.





Make the switch to Paper Towels:

- Avoid using jet air dryers as these spread 10x more bacteria and viruses than using paper towels.¹³
- Make the switch to paper hand towels to reduce the spread of germs and bacteria and increase staff and customer satisfaction.
- Use touch free or sensor hand towel dispensers.
- If you find that toilets are being blocked with hand towels, make a switch to flushable paper hand towels.

Introduce measures to improve overall hygiene:

- Use quality products for maximum compliance.
- Use soft hand towels that aren't abrasive on the skin.
- Use premium soaps that are unscented to maintain skin health.
- Use hand sanitisers with a minimum 70% alcohol content because the effectiveness of an alcohol-based sanitiser depends on the amount of alcohol in the formulation.¹⁴
- Use bins that house the bag inside to prevent bacteria and viruses collecting on the bags and ensure bins are easy to clean and wipe down underneath.

Implement noticeable changes in your office:

- Place hygiene equipment in visible and accessible areas where there's a natural flow of traffic so that staff, clients and visitors are prompted to maintain good hygiene.
- Introduce or update hand hygiene related signage at strategic places to encourage proper hand washing and sanitising.
- Implement effective hand washing and sanitising solutions within your office and educate staff on best practice.
- Communicate the increased levels of sanitation undertaken to give people confidence in your hygiene standards.

With these measures in place, businesses can safeguard their employees, reduce the risk of absenteeism due to sickness and have face-to-face interactions.

¹³Evolution of Hygiene Preferences Post COVID-19, Tork Survey 2021.

¹⁴Australian Government Department of Health, Hand sanitisers: Information for consumers, 2020.



Australia

Sales & Support Centre
Free phone 1800 643 634
PO Box 1580
Clayton South, Victoria 3169
customerservice@asaleocare.com

New Zealand

Sales & Support Centre
Free phone 0800 523 565
Private Bag 93-100
Henderson, Waitakere 0650
customerservice@asaleocare.com



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