



How to build and scale an office visitor policy

Revolutionizing Visitor Management:
A Guide to Creating and Scaling Effective Workplace Visitor Policies.

Why is visitor management important?

As many workplaces prepare for a return to the office or get ready to accommodate hybrid workers at least part-time, the increase in office building usage will likely lead to more visitors.

Visitor traffic has largely declined around the world with each new variant. But it inevitably recovers, occasionally nearing pre-pandemic levels in between.

To keep workers and visitors safe, healthy, and productive, it may be necessary to rethink

your company's workplace visitor policy in light of these shifts. In this guide, we'll look at how visitor management may change in the coming months and what it takes to create, implement, and scale the workplace visitor policy that's best for your building or business.

Preventing strangers from entering the workplace has obvious safety benefits - but even expected visitors often need to be scheduled, monitored, identified, or have their credentials checked to keep the workplace operating smoothly.



That's why more businesses are using visitor management systems (VMS) to track visitors to augment their existing reception features or act as a security and safety feature on job sites and in other facilities.



A good VMS has an array of features that allow businesses to:

- Formulate an entry procedure
- Confirm a visitor's ID
- Ensure visitors end up in the right place
- Alert employees to visitors so their work is not suddenly disrupted
- Alert visitors of safety precautions
- Ensure entrants don't pose a health risk
- Provide visitors with digital forms to reduce paperwork
- Provide a more professional and welcoming experience
- Create identity badges for guests
- Ensure legal compliance on-site
- ...and more

A VMS protects businesses, employees, and visitors and provides job site and building managers with maximum control over who enters a building and how they move around it. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, visitor management systems provided a touchless interface and questionnaires that set expectations for public health.

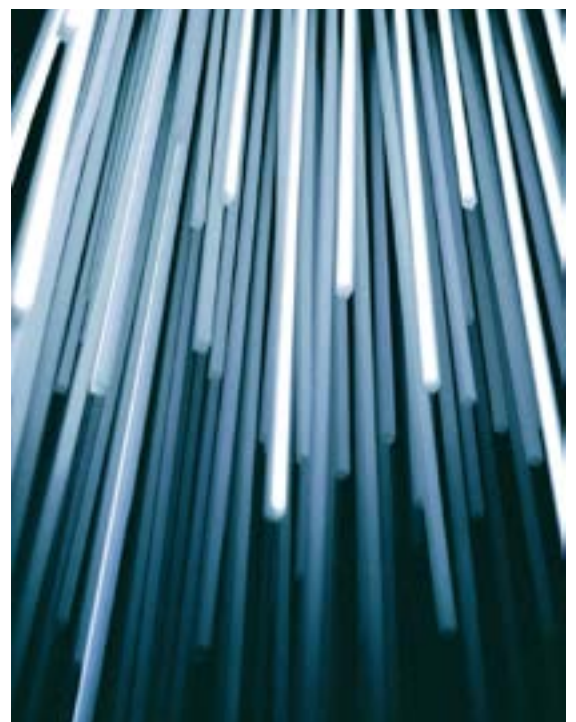
Of course, you can't just set up a welcome kiosk and call it a day. A VMS requires a business to have a workplace visitor policy in place.



What is a workplace visitor policy?

A workplace visitor policy is a statement setting out the rules and guidelines that apply to guests entering and moving around your facility. It may include entry requirements, areas to avoid, and advice on staying safe and avoiding injury or exposure. The policy may change depending on the type of visitor. It also needs to be clear about all expectations and precautions, as well as the consequences (such as removal from the property) visitors can expect for violating the policy.

When putting a workplace visitor policy into place, companies will likely need to consider how new circumstances (such as pandemic precautions)





may change the nature of visits and be ready to communicate new protocols to visitors, even if it means instructing them to defer to signs and security officers for requirements for entry and visitation.

The goal is to avoid risk to the company and the visitor and to protect people and property inside the building from everything from unnecessary distraction to criminal activity. However, the challenge is to simultaneously provide a welcoming atmosphere to appropriate visitors while doing so. Ultimately, this is the job of a workplace visitor management system (VMS) that can provide anything from welcome kiosks to mobile scheduling to on-site geofencing capabilities to monitor visitors' movements once they are on-site.

How to create and implement a workplace visitor policy

Whether a company employs a receptionist or automates reception via a VMS to implement workplace visitor policies, there are standard questions that employers can ask themselves to get started on a workplace visitor policy.

Some of the standard considerations that go into a workplace visitor policy include:

- Who is allowed to enter?
- The hours when visitor entry is permitted.
- Whether an appointment is needed in advance.
- How visitors can identify who they need to see and how they can gain permission for that visit.
- What type of VMS is needed to help log in visitor details?
- Who may authorize a visit and determine where the visitor can go within the building?
- What authority the visitor can ask or default to in case of a question or emergency. (For example, will there be an escort or a receptionist to answer questions along the way?)
- The type of documentation needed for a visitor to enter, visit or conduct business inside. (This may be anything from a sign-in signature to showing a government ID or even providing professional credentials in advance.)
- Whether the visitor will need to show credentials throughout their visit (by wearing an ID badge, for example).
- What areas should be kept off-limits to visitors (equipment rooms, areas with filing cabinets, etc.)?
- The behavior expected of visitors once inside (including the use of cameras and recording devices)
- Can a VMS help visitors read, understand, and sign liability waivers and non-disclosure agreements?
- Which staff can approve and escort visitors or confirm their ID?
- How staff should be informed of visitor policies and give feedback on whether they need alterations or flexibility in some areas.
- Whether employees are subjected to a visitor policy when they enter the building during non-work hours or while on leave (to ensure they are entering for legitimate purposes and avoid unnecessary distractions).
- What disciplinary actions employees can expect if they violate the workplace visitor policy.
- What types of emergencies necessitate loosening restrictions (for example, an easy entry path to all areas for first responders)?

- How a visitor management system will log policy violations, and who will receive this information.
- What security measures a company can put in place to protect physical and intellectual property and employee time and safety? (This may be a security guard, a protocol for alerting authorities about threats, or rooms that are only accessible with a specific type of badge, or all of the above.)
- How a VMS can help companies maintain compliance with legal protocols (for example, in healthcare facilities that also have HIPAA laws to consider)?

Businesses that deal regularly with vendors, contractors, and delivery personnel often strive to make those visits more streamlined, especially if entering the building or worksite requires ID badges each time. In those cases, it's helpful to consider:

- If regular visitors are required to sign in or carry permanent credentials.
- Limiting access to some regular visitors so a modified visitor policy can apply (for example, collecting deliveries in the waiting area rather than having them delivered directly to recipients).
- Whether any friends and family can visit with special, "lightened" permission requirements.
- Who will supervise visitors with special permissions?

More recently, COVID-19 and workplace violence have necessitated new and evolving protocols as well as new training for employees. They've also made it necessary to think in advance about how an altered workplace visitor policy can be both comprehensive and flexible and implemented as soon as it's needed. Considerations may include:

- How a visitor management system can be programmed to change entry protocols if new social distancing requirements or other public health protocols are put into place overnight.
- Can a visitor management system aid in contact tracing during COVID-19 or other epidemic or pandemic incidents?
- Whether temperature checks/thermal readers and touchless entry technology are required.
- Assessing risks to employees in light of recent or local incidents of workplace violence.
- Creating a culture of safety for employees to share the names of visitors who may be personally threatening to them. (For example, if there is a domestic violence dispute or a no-contact order in place, can a policy accommodate specific visitor limitations while maintaining all parties' dignity and privacy?)
- Who will be alerted if a restricted individual attempts to access the building?
- How are former employees treated within a workplace visitor policy? (For example, under what circumstances can a company decide to limit access to a workplace based on a perceived threat?)
- How is data about individuals who may pose a threat stored, and who has access to it?
- How can a visitor management system help with reporting incidents of workplace violence?

Using a workplace visitor policy to create a safe, productive, and welcoming atmosphere

The long list of considerations about securing a worksite and protecting employees and property may make it sound like employers need to create a fortress. But in many cases, providing a welcoming atmosphere for visitors and providing for their safety is the primary concern.

Creating a workplace visitor policy requires anticipating the potential threats visitors may pose to a workplace (or that the workplace may pose to them). But creating limitations is only part of the policy-making process.

Once you have a thoughtful workplace visitor policy in place, a Visitor Management System, such as Sine's, can help you greet your visitors in a way that is professional, informative, safety-oriented, and efficient.

Instead of waiting in long lines and being presented with piles of paperwork to sign, a VMS can be a relatively neutral mechanism for managing people without being unnecessarily exclusionary.



