

White paper

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LobbyTrac™

Visitor Management Systems

Visitor Management Systems: Meeting security, operational and privacy needs.

Enabling digital onsite visitor and contractor management.

Introduction

Keeping track of visitors to public, commercial—and even private—buildings has been a tradition for centuries through visitors books. However, a paper-based approach is no longer a viable solution today, especially as Australian organisations have to comply with increasing workplace health and safety regulations.

“One of the most game-changing benefits of a digital visitor management system is its ability to dramatically increase a site’s security.”



Some stats to keep in mind:

In 2016–17, there were more than 230,000 workplace interventions. This included 85,000 proactive and about 70,000 reactive workplace visits (visits related to an incident or complaint). Organisations need to ensure they are fully compliant with workplace health and safety laws as it remains a top priority across all states.¹

Non-compliance with regulations can result in serious fines for corporations. This can range from \$6,000 for “failing to keep records of high-risk work licences”, up to \$3 million for a category one offense: “the most serious breaches, where a duty holder recklessly exposes a person to the risk of death or serious injury”.²

Visitor management systems (VMS) have evolved quickly, as technology has become more advanced and affordable. The potential for these systems to add significant value to organisations is massive.

In 2011, Australia introduced specific workplace health and safety laws that included a requirement for organisations to keep track of all people on their premises, including the purpose of the visit and their contact details.

A simple paper-based visitors book can't enable businesses to gather sufficient information about their visitors or contractors to ensure reliable security and safety. In the event of an incident, knowing a person's name and, perhaps, the company they work for, isn't enough for emergency services to determine whether that person is truly accounted for. The critical need to capture more meaningful and historic information about visitors led to the development of digital visitor management.

Digital visitor management has now become the standard, as it provides a way to more accurately and efficiently check people into the facility when they arrive, including being able to print out badges with the person's photograph and other identification information. In case of an emergency, the information can be accessed from offsite, letting emergency services check to ensure all visitors, contractors and staff have been accounted for.

Beyond simply checking visitors and contractors in at reception, the latest digital visitor management systems offer a raft of additional benefits. These innovative solutions have become risk management systems letting businesses run their sites more effectively and securely.

The benefits of a digital system.

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An effective digital visitor management system can deliver significant benefits in six key areas.

01. Efficiency

In busy buildings and lobbies, waiting in line to check in can be frustrating for visitors or contractors, particularly if it makes them late for their meeting. A digital system lets the visitor use a simple and intuitive touchscreen to add their details and have their photo taken. The identification badge is printed on the spot. This takes no more time than the average check-in kiosk for a flight and lets people self-serve.

Furthermore, the system can generate reports on contractor access to inform relevant managers of upcoming expiry dates. This helps manage contractor admissions and saves time and potential frustration when access permissions have expired.

Modern solutions also enable individualisation, creating a profile for each contractor with their specific access information.

02. Cost-savings

The cost of having multiple touchscreens in a lobby is far lower than employing security and reception staff to manage visitors. A digital system can let businesses lower those costs by having fewer people at reception or by redeploying those people. When receptionists no longer have to supervise the check-in process they can get on with other, more valuable work.

In addition, a digital solution can create a central process that can easily be rolled out across one or multiple sites to keep up with the evolving number of staff, contractors and visitors. And it can also be customised to individual office requirements.

03. Communication

Many business professionals have shown up to a meeting only to find that the receptionist can't reach the person they're there to see. This results in delays and frustration, with the receptionist needing to try to contact the person multiple times or contact multiple people. Using a digital system, employees receive an SMS or email notification as soon as their guest has arrived, without any human intervention required.

04. Safety

Checking into many businesses requires completing a site induction for safety reasons. These inductions usually inform the visitor or contractor of any emergency procedures or other site rules to be aware of, such as restricted areas or prohibited activities. Using the digital system, this induction can be completed quickly and efficiently without requiring a lengthy conversation with a person qualified to conduct the induction. This saves time but, more importantly, ensures that all non-staff are aware of emergency procedures and other safety information.

Businesses can also use the system to access historical data regarding frequency or times of visitors' and contractors' access to the building. This can be useful if the person is suspected of wrongdoing or if the business simply wants to consider more effective ways of working with selected visitors and contractors. For example, the data may determine that it is more efficient for a particular person to spend a single, entire day at the office every week rather than visit for an hour or two every other day. Also, it can show who has been exposed to a health or safety risk.

05. Security

One of the most reassuring benefits of a digital visitor management system is its ability to dramatically increase a site's security.

If a contractor doesn't have the right permissions to be on site, or their permissions have expired, the system will let them know and also notify the appropriate staff member.

With all visitors and contractors required to wear a clearly-visible badge that includes their photograph and the purpose of their visit, along with the person they are visiting, it becomes easy to identify unauthorised persons.

When employees see an unaccompanied visitor, they can first check to see whether they have a badge, then they can offer to help that person get to where they need to go. If the person doesn't have a badge, the employee should be aware of security procedures, whether that includes calling security immediately or personally escorting the person back to the reception area where they can sign in correctly.

Being able to easily identify people who belong in the building, as well as those who don't, can help ensure that workplaces remain secure. This also requires the organisation to build a culture of security to augment the badges and sign-in system.

As well as protecting the organisation itself, this solution can help protect the privacy of visitors. Often, competing sales reps will flick through the visitors' book to see whether their competitors have visited the company recently. This helps them understand which organisations they may be competing with in a tender situation; information that should remain confidential. Keeping visitor information secure in a digital system means visitors can't access that kind of information, maintaining the privacy of others.

06. Complete visibility

Each business has its own specific site requirements for staff, visitors and contractors. This can be a simple induction, but sometimes it's more complicated and includes things like insurance, permits and qualifications. A modern system will have the capability of tracking all the information required.

A digital visitor management system can also help track people's movements on site and run reports as needed. This can highlight which contractors are compliant and which ones aren't, so that action can be taken as needed.

A modern solution can also manage and maintain assets ranging from access cards to technology equipment and even pool cars.

The future of Visitor Management Systems

Workplace health and safety for visitors and contractors is a major concern for organisations today and finding non-disruptive solutions that enhance operations can be difficult. The winning combination for any visitor management system should feature critical components that create the best solution to maximise safety, security and the latest technology to protect the office, staff, contractors and visitors.



Conclusion

The Australian Workplace Health and Safety Act of 2011 means every business must have a mechanism for signing in and tracking visitors. Using a paper-and-pen approach is no longer good enough in this age of heightened security requirements.

Organisations need to look for a VMS that includes key features such as:

- The ability to incorporate unique brand graphics and messaging to the system's welcome screen and badges.
- The ability to customise badges with specific information or identifiers to improve security.
- A notification system that alerts employees via SMS or email when their visitor arrives, minimising the time the visitor spends unattended.
- The ability to generate real-time reports in case of emergency, including contact and emergency contact details for all visitors.
- The ability to generate proactive reports to easily update visitor and contractor information, review hours worked on site and check compliance with workplace safety rules.
- The ability to restrict access to visitor information, storing it securely in a cloud-based database.
- A non-disruptive workflow that streamlines the process of managing visitors and contractors on site, rather than complicating it.
- By taking advantage of the latest VMS technology, businesses can improve their site security, safety and efficiency, while saving money and presenting a professional, forward-thinking public face.

Footnotes

1. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/review-model-whs-laws-final-report>
2. <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/review-model-whs-laws-final-report>

Australia

Level 1, 68 Waterloo Road
Macquarie Park NSW 2113
13 23 63
pitneybowes.com/au

For more information, call or visit us online.