

Providing heightened safety and security to my Accommodation Programme post COVID-19 Pandemic

The suspension of corporate RFPs in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic was recommended by the CEO of the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) endorsing the postponement until 2021. This decision was made after discussions among GBTA's U.S and European accommodation committees, corporate travel buyers, suppliers to the industry, and more than 50 hotel companies representing thousands of hotels worldwide.

In the absence of consistent guidance, hotel's and hotel groups (e.g. Accor, Marriott, Hilton) are actively reviewing and updating their existing hygiene and health protection processes to ensure effective minimum standards at every point from arrival to departure, taking into account local circumstances. The demand for new standards will have long term implications for the hospitality industry as the concern about infectious diseases will require that hotel guests and employees are confident in the cleanliness and health security of hotels.

Those hotels which have an embedded security culture are likely to prove most effective in creating the protective health environment that travellers and those with a duty of care for them will now expect. The disciplines of security mirror the disciplines of health protection:

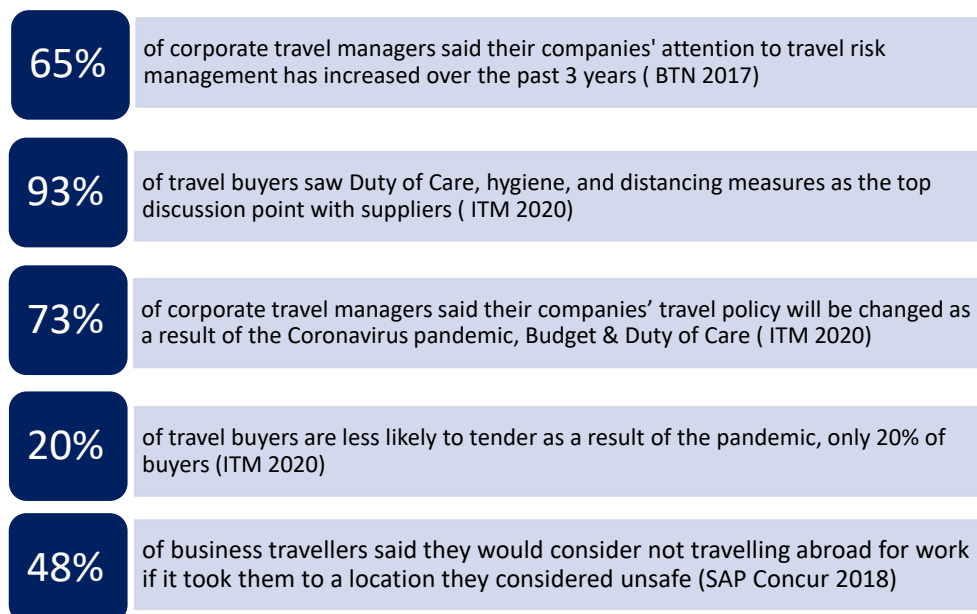
- Understanding the threat – in the case Covid-19
- Being conversant with evidence based preventative strategies and tactics
- Designing, testing, and implementing standard operating procedures (SOP's) to deliver the strategy and tactics
- Learning from experience, and that of others and refining procedures
- Training staff and testing performance
- Leading and managing the health security operation with commitment and diligence so that it becomes part and parcel of a good service operation

These new health and safety requirements will change the hospitality industry going forward and the standards required to ensure that these are being met. 93% of corporate travel managers who attended the 2020 ITM Conference were interested in duty of care, hygiene and social distancing measures being undertaken by suppliers. In addition, there was an overall view that there needs to be a minimum level for hygiene and safety which organisations can work to that can then address the heightened sense of safety and security assurance required by travellers.

The historical approach of providing a cursory look over RFP responses to health, safety, hygiene, and security questions will have to be a thing of the past. This is triggering the industry to question whether this is the opportunity to review the whole RFP process and whether it is fit for purpose in its current format.

Health, safety, hygiene, and security questions are included in RFPs, but it is extremely difficult for travellers and travel risk managers to assess whether the preventative measures are actually in place, effective and maintained. Standards and security capabilities in hotels vary enormously and can be heavily influenced by hotel ownership structures and can largely be self-regulating when it comes to the protection of guests. Also, the travel buyer, risk manager and security teams are the ones who are in the firing line when there are issues at those properties, from a due diligence perspective.

A consistent global standards framework against which any plans or protocols can be assessed and independently assured is required to give corporates and guests, confidence that the plans are robust. These standards should also be applicable anywhere in the world and internationally recognised.



Independent Standards Approach

However good a hotel's stated approach to the virus, guests will need reassurance that the approach is thoroughly and reliably implemented, and the hotel is as safe as it can be.

Is there an opportunity for a 'health security' benchmark based on accredited standards which have been adapted to follow established and accepted scientific, and medical advice, from formal Government sources? These standards would be regulated by a UK Government approved standards and awarding body which assesses the evidence of compliance before issuing an independent Certification of Health Security Standards. The award of such an accreditation certificate would provide real reassurance that a professional and thorough approach has been taken to reducing risks from Covid-19.

The GSA Approach to Independent Certification for Covid-19 Preparedness

GSA's approach incorporates World Health Organisation standards and other sources of international best practice to provide a robust and relevant 'fit' with national and local regulations.

GSA assesses hotel security and health & safety standards in partnership with SFJ Awards, a UK Government approved qualifications, standards and awards body which operates globally in the health and security sectors.

Consolidating our expertise and that of our partners to develop a hygiene and health security certification standard, we are able to address the immediate requirement for businesses. GSA are able to offer security accreditation for hotel properties to include health, safety and hygiene meeting growing market needs.

GSA and SFJ Awards (which includes Skills for Health), can provide that additional assurance through **independent, international certification and accreditation.**

SFJ Awards' Accreditation Programmes and Qualifications have been delivered Internationally with a wide range of organisations using SFJ Awards products and services including China, India, Pakistan, Middle East, Africa, South America and Europe.

Key to a successful approach is a comprehensive plan for enhanced hygiene and health protection which incorporates well considered processes and procedures across all hotel operations to prevent the spread of infection and reduce the risk of illness, including:

- Effective implementation of local governments' guidance or regulations
- Competent risk identification, control and monitoring systems led from the top down
- Check-in to check-out process control
- Staff training/engagement
- Effective guidance to guests, suppliers, contractors, and visitors to support stringent hygiene requirements
- Enhanced incident management protocols
- Enhanced food, beverage, and amenity management
- Rigorous back of house procedures
- Detailed action plans for containment in the event of a related health incident at the premises

Benefits of GSA Covid-19 Pandemic Level Hygiene and Health Security Certification

- Increased guest and employee confidence and assurance in the specific hygiene and health security levels required by guests, corporate clients and travel management companies
- Risk mitigation for insurance companies
- An independent certification process by SFJ Awards which demonstrates how the hotel has attained an independently validated pandemic level of hygiene and health security procedures through following exacting good practice
- Internationally recognised and applicable
- Frameworks to advise and train employees, contractors, and suppliers