

Searching for the Silver Bullet

April 2020

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Let's face it, in times of crisis, "Silver Bullets" don't exist. If they did, we would have used them by now, and we wouldn't be in a crisis. An issue rarely comes to fruition if we already have a readily available solution. Typically, we are all caught completely unprepared.

I think it's obvious that I'm referring to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has so heavily affected industries across the U.S., with the aviation industry taking one of the hardest hits ([worse, even, than 9/11](#)). There have been multiple articles and conference calls between industry organizations and experts, debating what solutions can be deployed, if any, and whether they are going to "solve" the problem.

The truth is nothing we do is going to completely SOLVE the issue. There is currently no vaccine in sight; even the [most optimistic prognosis is that we might have one within a year](#). Even if there is a vaccine, how effective will it be at preventing or eradicating the infection? How will it be distributed? How long

will that take, and how will severely impacted regions globally distribute it effectively? [There is a significant chance of resurgence](#), and we may have no choice but to implement restrictions yet again. This may become an ongoing pandemic for more than just this year, and this will unfortunately not be the last pandemic we see in most of our lifetimes.

In the meantime, should we sit back and do nothing? Can we wait that long to be proactive about detecting and preventing the spread of this disease? Rather than taking a "wait and see what happens" approach, (which may prove fatal to our industry) why are we not asking: How can we operate more safely and effectively WHILE this pandemic (or any others that will come) is ongoing?

If the aviation industry has learned anything, it is that we are experts at *mitigating risk*. It's what we have done since aircraft first took to the skies. Flying has never been risk-free, and it never will be, but the industry has still thrived



and [become the safest way to travel](#). **We can and will get back to being the safest way to travel.**

With that in mind, we've had a team at Faith Group developing multiple solutions, in a layered approach, to address public wellness screening and prevention. Here are some things we are recommending to our clients today:

- ▶ **Thermal Screening** – Probably top of the list of “not a silver bullet” is thermal screening. Yes, there are many asymptomatic cases, which can still spread the disease; however, there are a lot of cases that are not asymptomatic which do result in a fever. Studies [show an estimated 46% of cases would not be detected](#) (meaning more than half **would** be detected, which is still a substantial number). [Healthcare institutions](#) and airports around the world have already approved and implemented screening in a *layered approach*; we (U.S. airports) should do the same.¹
- ▶ **Touchless Travel** – Once we get moving again, the sanitation of high-use public surfaces is still going to be of huge concern. Having a high-touch kiosk environment is no longer how Airports and airlines should process passengers, [it's one of the easiest ways for the virus to spread](#). The industry needs to move towards touchless travel, with facial recognition at kiosks and touchless scanning of mobile boarding passes or faces at all points of the passenger journey. Thankfully, we've already seen

¹ Not all thermal screening technology is created equal, and there are a lot of unreliable products entering the market. If interested in deploying, please contact us for some info on tested vendors we are recommending to clients. A higher level of read accuracy can make all the difference in a successful deployment.

this work effectively, with Airlines [like Delta](#) already moving towards a full biometric journey, and Faith Group has led or participated in studies and pilots at nearly a dozen airports across the country.²

- ▶ **Air Filtration** – Negative pressure locations and air quality within the airport should be better than outside. Now is the chance to focus on these issues by providing ventilation and filtration that rivals healthcare institutions, while supporting a safer environment within the airport. While I know the Auntie Anne's pretzel smell is amazing, we must look at this more pragmatically, with current and future airborne pathogens in mind.
- ▶ **Mask Requirements** – Once the supply chain catches up, the goal here is to prevent spread, and masks do that both safely and effectively. Airports should require mask usage within the facility, and if a traveler doesn't have one, a surgical mask could be provided for a very small fee. [Mask usage is effective and recommended for mitigating the risk of spreading infectious diseases](#). China already requires mask usage at all airports, and they have mostly gotten back on their feet and are flying planes. [Canada also just went down this path and adopted these best practices as well.](#)

The solutions listed above have not yet been piloted by the majority of U.S. Airports, and that in and of itself is disappointing. We have so far

² This isn't just for passengers; back of house processes for Airport stakeholders also need to be considered. Fingerprint readers for biometric access control, for example, may need to change.



been content to sit back with a “wait it out” approach, but we don’t have that time! Let’s say the approaches above, when combined, reduced the chance of an infected individual transmitting a disease at your airport by only 60% (I think it will be way more, but I’ll be conservative; thermal screening alone captures more than half), would you still do it? I would say YES! After all, if left untouched, the infected individuals would be traversing through your airport transmitting the disease to your other customers and staff. True, there is no 100% solution, but I will tell you this - **we will not figure out how to address this new reality unless we try different approaches, learn, and improve.**

Even if a contact tracing app is deployed tomorrow, [along with a wellness app that guarantees you](#) are healthy (by the way, this works in China, but I can’t see it in the U.S.), that would not address the changes that are inevitably needed to improve the current processes we have in place. Infectious diseases are unfortunately here to stay, and by the way, have always been here. Have you ever gotten sick because you took a flight and sat beside someone else who was sick? We used to think that was acceptable; do we now?

Will there be operational impacts to the recommendations I have outlined above? Absolutely. Will those operational impacts need to be tested, evaluated, modified, and updated? Undoubtedly. Should those potential impacts hold us back, while we all just throw

our hands up and say this is too hard? I think you get my point. We will surely have to refine solutions as we progress - that’s the only way we’ll learn and improve. We all keep talking about the “new normal,” but we must realize that waking up to a new normal means changing the way we have done things in the past. We need to restore confidence in public places and our aviation system.

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We have been working hard at Faith Group to consolidate a wide variety of information that is related to this pandemic and its impact on the Aviation industry we all love. We appreciate the information many partners and experts have already shared with us, and we continue to refine our approach. If your Airline or Airport (or other industry) would like to discuss proactive steps they can take, or what those might look like, *please don’t hesitate to reach out to us*. Faith Group will help you be a part of adapting to the “new normal” and getting the aviation industry back on its feet. Let’s get to work!

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