

Sanitizing during a global pandemic

Managing a recall of a high-demand product

Few products are considered essential across all demographics, populations and locations. But during a pandemic, sanitizing products fit that category.

When the coronavirus pandemic started to take hold, manufacturers of personal hygiene and disinfectant products, among others, were forced to respond to unprecedented demand adding pressure to already stressed supply chains and manufacturing facilities. Hand sanitizers faced immense regulatory scrutiny and a running list of recalls.

Challenge

Recalling a hand sanitizer product during pandemic-driven lockdowns and whilst facing supply chain pressures is a feat that arguably no company would have been ready for. Attempting to navigating the process without a plan made the process infinitely more perilous.

When a potential bacterial contamination was detected in a product that hospitals, healthcare professionals and general consumers turned to for coronavirus prevention, a very public recall ensued. With 10MM+ units impacted across 35+ countries, the emotions and stakes ran high.

The manufacturer attempted to approach the event with no recall plan, standard operating procedure or methodology in place. Without a clear process and line of authority within the organization to make decisions, the available information was often contradictory. Add a growing number of COVID-19 complications and shipping restrictions to the process, and the recall became extremely difficult for almost any organization to execute.

Historically the manufacturer faced only a handful of small, localized product issues, making a recall of this scale unprecedented. This caused several missteps along the way, including an initial recall communication that only notified one national regulator despite 35+ markets being impacted. As international regulators learned about the recall second-hand, the brand faced an uphill battle when it came to regulatory compliance.

Recall notification, customer engagement and reverse logistics were also challenges for this traditionally B2B organization. The company did not have the capabilities or experience needed to effectively communicate with customers and consumers. Similarly, the supply chain was focused on outbound sending of product, with limited solutions for inbound collections directly from customers.

10M+
units recalled



15K
pallets from distribution
warehouses



**8K PARCEL
RETURNS**
from health care
professionals



35+
countries, and
multiple languages

Solution

Having a partner with a full suite of recall solutions proved to be an asset for a company navigating uncharted recall waters.

With the company's future business and reputation on the line, Sedgwick brand protection stepped in to provide a wide range of solutions including recall notification and delivery of field safety notices, call center solutions, reverse logistics product processing, record-keeping and regulatory reporting, and final product disposition. We supported the brand with core services to effectively remove dangerous products out of the supply chain, from Tier 1 Hospital and healthcare professionals (HCPS) to Warehouses and Distributors.

Bolstering customer and consumer communication efforts, we established an online microsite to allow individuals to proactively register their information and advise us of what affected product they held in stock. The site was supported by a full call center where customers could get the information they needed and schedule a collection or product pickup. We further ensured these resources were available in all major EU languages.

When the recall faced new requirements in a different regulatory jurisdiction, Sedgwick supported by delivering the same core services and leveraged local relationships with carriers and logistics providers to safely retrieve product from impacted retail stores, hospitals and distributors.

As logistics challenges and delays among traditional postal and shipping providers became more prevalent, we worked with our extensive network to arrange drivers to visit hospitals and collect affected product, bypassing network delays and ensuring an effective recall.

Results

An operational recall roadmap ensured that the company's focus was on effective customer engagement and efficient, safe product removal. With this structure in place, we were able to quickly adapt and deploy solutions as new challenges arose.

From the start of our engagement, Sedgwick brand protection provided an operational roadmap for the recall. We shared with the manufacturer how a typical recall would function and advised them of likely challenges, best practices and information that regulators expect, guiding the brand to focus on major compliance and reputational risks rather than worry about boots-on-the-ground operational needs. This reduced stress and anxiety, allowing the brand to focus on strategic decision-making.

In addition to the units removed from retail stores, an additional 15,000 pallets from distribution warehouses and 8,000 parcel returns from health care professionals were retrieved. On a parallel track, we supported recall notification and continued customer engagement across multiple languages, including English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Dutch from a centralized contact center

Even launching during the early stages of a pandemic, the event was officially closed in just under one year. This success was in large part due to the manufacturer's ability to leverage a wide net of partners throughout global markets, facilitated by Sedgwick brand protection. Through this process, we were able to tap into regional capabilities when needed to create bespoke solutions in response to localized challenges. Most notably, this effort successfully supported the brand as it located and removed product from Italy – the first country to enter national lockdown.

Key takeaways

- Without sufficient pre-incident planning, there was no clear line of authority within the business to make decisions. As a result, limited, and even contradictory, information was available. This challenge, which can be resolved through effective planning and mock recalls, put the company on the wrong foot from the launch of the recall.
- Recalling a hand sanitizer product during pandemic-driven lockdowns and supply chain pressures is a feat that arguably no company would have been ready for. Knowing now the challenges that the pandemic created across industries, companies would be wise to revisit recall plans and make updates that will serve beneficial regardless of when a recall occurs.

Sedgwick brand protection

Brand and reputation are the most valuable and vulnerable assets a business has. Brands embody and encapsulate everything a business does, and its customers expect. Nothing says more about a company's commitment to its customers than its efforts to uphold promises of safety, quality, and service. That's why companies are often remembered more for how they handle an in-market challenge than for the problem itself. We know what it takes to manage recalls in a way that upholds your commitments to customers, supply chain partners, industry and regulators.

Trusted by the world's leading brands and businesses, we work in partnership to manage the risks and minimize the impacts of in-market business and product crises. Since 1995, we have managed more than 5,000 of the most sensitive and time-critical recall and remediation programs - spanning 60+ countries and 20+ languages.

To learn more about our recall, remediation and retention solutions, contact us today.

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