



UNITED SITE SERVICES

How COVID-19 has redefined what's 'essential' for USS customers

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The COVID-19 crisis has forced all to rethink the definition of essential workers.

No longer meaning only the areas of public safety, healthcare and transportation, the term has grown to include anything supporting those industries and many others during times of crisis.

For United Site Services, the country's largest provider of portable sanitation and temporary site services, it's created an opportunity to tell a story.

USS services were needed to support efforts in Seattle to shelter those unable to self-quarantine to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

USS services were needed to support the construction of temporary hospitals in the New York City area.

USS services kept major construction projects operating throughout the outbreak.

Yes, services provided by USS service technicians are essential.

"Unlike previous disasters or even slowdowns, this one has really brought to the forefront the essential nature of services that we provide for all of our different types of customers," USS CEO Asterios Satrazemis said recently. "And so in an uncertain environment, we've had an opportunity to really help our customers understand the importance of hygiene and sanitation in their work sites. And the good news is customers are really jumping onboard."

"We think that this is going to be an important part of how we keep our communities safe by increasing our efforts around hand hygiene and sanitation."

This is Satrazemis' second stint with a Platinum Equity portfolio company, having served for two years as CEO of BlueLine Rental, before taking the helm at USS in

January 2019. Platinum acquired USS in 2017.

The crisis has also forced the business to examine operating procedures.

For USS, it's led to a laser focus on the best safety and hygiene practices for workers.

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For workers in corporate offices, Satrazemis revealed the company is examining the role of virtual work in the future, acknowledging a workplace trend that will likely grow as the country adjusts to living with COVID-19.

Those are among the topics addressed by Satrazemis during a recent interview with Platinum Equity.

(Answers have been edited for clarity).

Platinum Equity: Has the education of businesses and municipalities created opportunities as the country moves cautiously to reengage the economy?

Asterios Satrazemis: In the past, customers would only have their portable restrooms cleaned once a week. Now we're seeing many customers increasing that to two, three, four, sometimes even five times a week. Secondly, in the past, hand hygiene wasn't as high of a focus. They didn't put a critical eye on that piece of the overall sanitation picture. Now it is absolutely front and center.

PE: How were you able to procure scarce hand sanitizer?

Satrazemis: Who wasn't stockpiling hand sanitizer all over the world? Our provider had to stop providing hand sanitizer to anyone outside of the healthcare industry because there was such a run on it. We were able to work with them and help them understand we are an essential service. If we don't have it, we're potentially allowing people to not practice proper hand hygiene while they continued to work on construction sites or industrial or manufacturing plants throughout the outbreak. We need you to open that supply chain back up for us. And they did. That's why having good partnerships with your suppliers and not always looking to beat them up for the last penny is so important for your core supply base.

PE: You had to educate your suppliers that you are an essential service?

Satrazemis: Absolutely right. This is not over, but as we move through this, we're going to make sure that we utilize what we've learned and continue to educate our customer base, our supplier base, and our employees about the essential nature of the service. We're providing sanitation, we're providing hygiene. Once you make that pivot, you have a bit of an 'a-ha' moment.

PE: What measures have you taken to ensure the health and safety of service techs?

Satrazemis: We put in place our own hygiene protocols. We quickly added a number of different steps to the normal job to ensure that we were giving our team the maximum level of protection. Things like face shields, adding steps around the products that we were using that would kill the virus on contact, requiring people to use disposable gloves after every cleaning, requiring them to wipe down all surfaces that they were touching after every cleaning. Everybody's got face coverings in addition to the face shields. Additionally, we took 1,100 of our teammates (who aren't directly performing the services) and we had them all start working from home, working virtually.





PE: Has it helped you look at things differently for when this crisis passes?

Satrazemis: We are looking very critically at what the future of work at USS will look like (USS announced recently work-from-home measures will remain in effect until at least the end of the year). All the enhanced safety protocols that we've put in place for our technicians, we don't expect to remove those anytime soon.

PE: Let's move to the loss of events that were either postponed or lost like Burning Man, the NFL Draft and PGA Tour events. Is there a sense of loss there?

Satrazemis: Events are a subset of our overall revenue, but it's a very visible portion. A job like Burning Man, I don't think there's another company in the U.S. that could help Burning Man come to life. I'm fairly certain there's no other business that has the quantity and quality of people to build that temporary city. They would have to go to multiple vendors to get what they get from us. So yes, our team is disappointed in losing the ability to provide for those tens of thousands of people.

PE: What percentage of your business is from government vs. private industry? Have you seen government contracts increase significantly?

Satrazemis: We have definitely seen an increase, though government is still going to represent a single digit level percentage of our overall revenue.

PE: USS is huge in the U.S., but what about your global footprint?

Satrazemis: That's actually one of the exciting things about the future opportunity for USS. It's been in business for 20 years and it was built up over those 20 years through many acquisitions. We're still only in 25 states in the U.S. We're not in Canada and we're not overseas. So you can see why Platinum acquired this amazing investment back in 2017. This is a business that has an incredible amount of runaway and we've continued that acquisition activity to grow the business and there's no reason why this isn't going to be at some point the business that's all throughout North America and beyond. We're still early in this journey.