

Return Timer Standard

RTS-1.0

Public Specification

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1. Purpose

This document defines the minimum functional and communication requirements for any system claiming compliance with the Return Timer Standard.

A Return Timer replaces vague absence messaging with precise, visible, and measurable return timing.

The purpose of this standard is to reduce customer uncertainty, standardize temporary absence communication, introduce measurable return commitment, and establish minimum clarity requirements.

2. Scope

This standard applies to retail service counters, repair shops, clinics, government service desks, and other staffed environments where temporary absence occurs.

This standard does not apply to full business closures, scheduled off-days, or emergency shutdowns.

3. Definitions

Return Timer: A visible, time-based system communicating when a temporarily unavailable service provider will return.

Declared Return Time: A specific clock time indicating when service will resume.

Live Countdown: A continuously updating display showing time remaining until return.

Visible Service State: A clearly indicated operational state such as OPEN, AWAY, OFFLINE, or RETURNING IN.

Temporary Absence: An interruption of service expected to last less than one operational period.

4. Core Requirements

4.1 **Declared Return Time (Mandatory):** A specific return time must be displayed. Vague phrases such as 'Back Soon' are not compliant.

4.2 **Live Countdown (Mandatory):** A continuously updating countdown synchronized to real time must be visible.

4.3 **Visible Service State (Mandatory):** The operational state must be clearly displayed and readable within two seconds.

4.4 **Clear Communication (Mandatory):** The system must clearly communicate temporary unavailability and confirmed return time.

5. Display Requirements

The display must be visible at the point of service and readable from typical queue distance.

The system must meet accessibility standards, including sufficient contrast and text-based state indicators.

6. Accuracy Requirements

Countdown deviation must not exceed plus or minus one second.

If return time changes, the countdown must immediately update.

System time must be synchronized daily or via network time protocol.

7. Behavioral Expectations

When service resumes, the countdown must cease and the service state must update to OPEN.

If delayed, the declared return time and countdown must reset immediately.

8. Non-Compliance Conditions

Systems using vague messaging, static times without countdown, hidden timing information, or failing to update state are not compliant.

9. Optional Enhancements

Optional features may include SMS notifications, QR engagement, analytics tracking, or delay alerts. These are not required for compliance.

10. Measurable Outcomes

Implementation is expected to improve clarity, customer confidence, trust in return commitment, and perceived professionalism.

11. Versioning

Future versions may include API compliance, display size standards, industry modules, and certification procedures.

12. Compliance Declaration

Organizations implementing all mandatory clauses may declare: 'Compliant with Return Timer Standard v1.0'.