

cohεsion

VISITOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM BUYER'S GUIDE



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HE JUST WALKED RIGHT IN.

THE FRONT DESK WAS OVERWHELMED.

They were dealing with the morning rush, calling tenants to let them know that their visitors had arrived, managing handwritten entry logs, printing badges, updating spreadsheets...

The intruder rode the elevator up with an employee. Then, he went down a few floors to a restricted area. No one stopped him.

Hours later, a sensitive file went missing.

Worse yet, within 6 hours, proprietary client data was compromised. Total estimated damage: \$2.3M in breach response costs.

And there was no record of him ever being there.

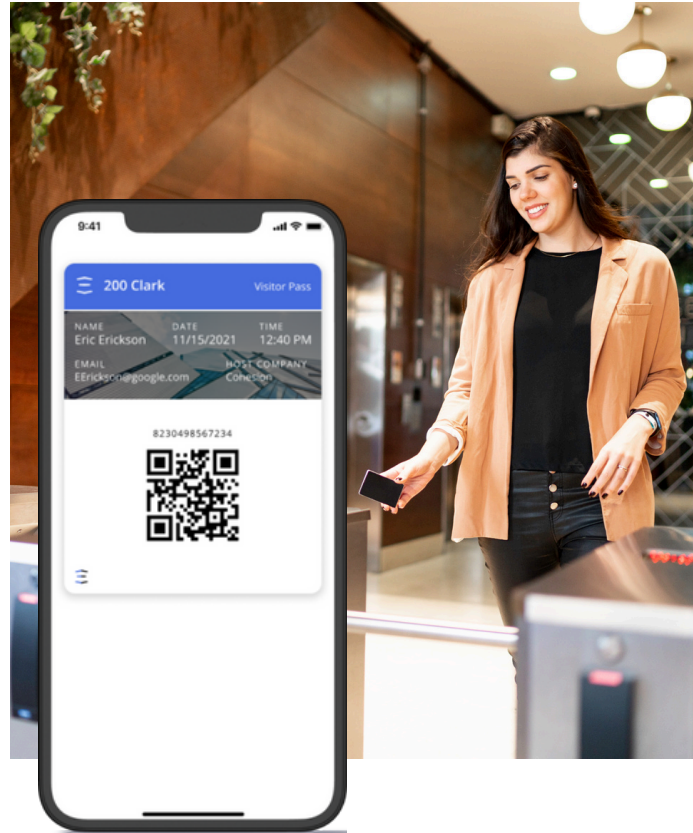
YOUR LOBBY IS A LIABILITY

They look like visitors, walking in with a smile and a friendly nod. With buildings managing dozens or even hundreds of guests daily, it's easy to see how an intruder can slip past security.

Despite this threat vector, **39% of security leaders still rely on outdated manual processes** like paper sign-in sheets, spreadsheets, or a flurry of emails and phone calls (Source: ASIS Int'l). These legacy methods weigh down your security team, giving you no real-time visibility, no audit trail, and no accountability.

The result: frustration for your staff, tenants, and guests, and exposure for the entire building.

That's why more organizations are turning to Visitor Management Systems (VMS), digital platforms that bring clarity, control, and confidence to every guest interaction.



In this guide, we'll help you understand the risks of manual visitor management processes, what to look for when choosing a VMS, and how to choose the right solution to protect your people, property, and reputation.

75%

reduction in unauthorized access incidents in buildings with integrated VMS and access control.

Source: HID Global

A **visitor management system** (or VMS) streamlines how guests are welcomed, authorized, and tracked by replacing paper sign-in sheets with secure, digitized, automated workflows. A modern VMS integrates with access control to enhance security, ensure compliance, and create a smooth, professional experience for every visitor.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A VISITOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Here are five reasons to invest in a visitor management system, and the critical capabilities to look for when selecting one.

1

SECURITY STARTS AT THE FRONT DOOR



Tailgating and unauthorized access account for nearly

60%

of physical security breaches in office buildings.

Source: Ponemon Institute, "Cost of a Data Breach Report"

Every guest is a potential risk if not correctly identified, credentialed, and tracked. A VMS strengthens your security posture and can stop unauthorized access before it costs you millions. Look for:

- * **Time-limited digital credentials** (QR codes, digital wallet passes) that automatically expire after a set period time.
- * **Access-level controls** that limit visitors to designated floors or rooms.
- * **Automated watchlist screening** tied to internal or third-party databases to flag high-risk individuals.
- * **Real-time location awareness** so you always know who's onsite, where, and for how long.
- * **Evacuation-ready reporting** that instantly generates live occupancy dashboards and emergency lists.

With this functionality in place, security teams can focus on identifying real threats, reducing tailgating, and detecting unauthorized movement.

2

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AT EVERY TOUCHPOINT

A visitor management system frees your staff and eliminates bottlenecks that frustrate employees, helping your whole security team run smarter. Essential features include:

- * **Pre-registration flows** let hosts schedule guests via a smartphone app or website and send the visitor an email or text with a QR code.
- * **Self-service kiosks and mobile check-in** for walk-in visitors or those without mobile credentials.
- * **Instant host notifications** via email, text, or internal chat.
- * **Digital document signing** for NDAs, waivers, health forms, and more.
- * **Reporting dashboards** that show visitor patterns, peak times, and frequent guests.
- * **Support for multiple properties** with one system to monitor portfolio-wide security, operations, and tenant satisfaction.

These features optimize throughput, reduce staffing demands, and easily track guest traffic.

Automating visitor management processes can reduce check-in time by up to 75%, while lowering front desk staffing costs by

30%

Source: Salesforce, "Workplace Trends Report"

3

A FIRST IMPRESSION THAT REFLECTS YOUR BRAND



86%

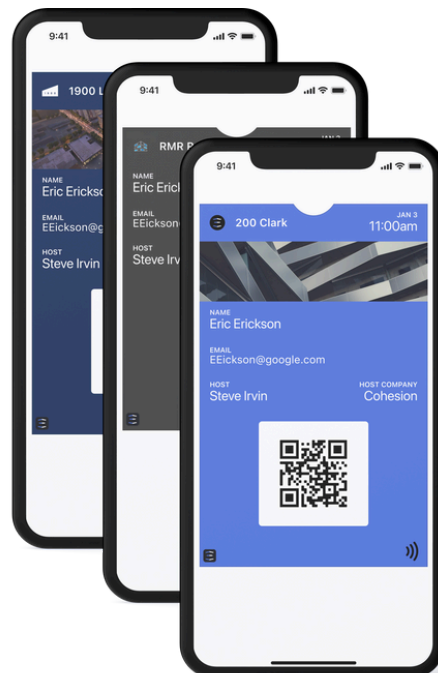
of people say a poor lobby or check-in experience negatively impacts their perception of a company or property.

Source: Salesforce, "Customer Experience Trends"

The guest experience starts in the lobby. A bad check-in process can erode your brand before they even get to the elevator. A great one turns your lobby experience into a competitive advantage. For operators, it extends the property's brand and can be a base building digital amenity that attracts prospective tenants. For tenants, it conveys that your organization values efficiency, hospitality, and professionalism. Look for:

- * **White-label apps** so hosts feel visitor management is an extension of your brand.
- * **Branded kiosks and custom workflows** that reflect your brand, from logos and colors to tone of voice.
- * **Customizable check-in paths** for different visitor types (VIPs, interview candidates, vendors, etc.).

Whether you're hosting a prospective tenant or a C-suite candidate, a modern VMS reinforces your brand's attention to detail and care.



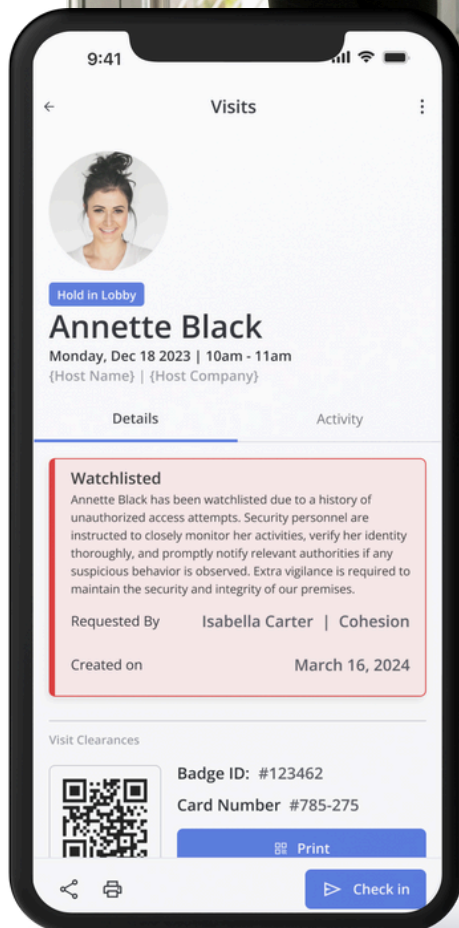
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COMPLIANCE WITHOUT THE BUSYWORK

Visitor logs aren't just operational records but legal, regulatory, and reputation safeguards. A robust solution ensures you stay audit-ready, but without the administrative burden. That's why you need to think about:

- * **Searchable digital visitor logs** that show who checked in, when, why, and whom they visited.
- * **Data retention policies** and export options to support legal requests or insurance reviews.
- * **Compliance alignment** with frameworks like HIPAA, GDPR, SOC 2, and local safety regulations.
- * **Disaster recovery and backup protocols** to protect against data loss or connectivity issues.

With everything digitized, you won't scramble for paper records or need to rely on memory. You'll have traceable records protecting your organization and your reputation.



76%

of organizations say that digitizing visitor logs improves audit readiness and speeds up compliance reporting by 2x or more.

Source: SIA, "2023 Security & Compliance Trends Report"

5

SCALABILITY AND INTEGRATION FOR THE BUILDINGS OF TOMORROW



Your visitor management system can't live in a silo. The best platforms are designed to integrate across your ecosystem. A VMS that grows with you protects your ROI and will help avoid costly system replacement costs. Essential features include:

- * **Integration with your access control systems** (HID, Genetec, Lenel, etc.).
- * **Support for Apple Wallet, Google Wallet, and mobile credentials** to enable fully touchless entry.
- * **API integrations** with HR systems, SSO, CRM platforms, and visitor screening tools.
- * **Supports for multiple buildings**, user types, and use cases giving you one system to manage security, operations across an entire portfolio.

These capabilities will help you avoid fragmented workflows, reduce maintenance complexity, and future-proof your operations as your footprint or security requirements evolve.



THE 3 KEY EXPERIENCES IN VISITOR MANAGEMENT

In addition to the features and benefits, effective visitor management is about creating a seamless, secure, and professional experience for everyone involved. That means keeping in mind the needs of three distinct groups of users: the **visitor**, the **host**, and the **security team**.

THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Guests come to your building for many reasons, and they're often unfamiliar with your layout or protocols. A great system ensures:

Frictionless entry with clear directions and minimal wait time.

Mobile-friendly check-in via QR code, email, or text.

Visitors know where to go and who they're meeting.

No need to download an app. Temporary guests want easy access without added complexity.

The person should feel welcomed, not confused (or stalled at the front desk).



THE HOST EXPERIENCE

For the person expecting a guest, a capable VMS should:

Automatically notify hosts upon arrival.

Allow hosts to pre-register guests to speed up arrival.

Make it easy to delegate or escalate guest handling if they're unavailable.

Reduce admin overhead while improving accountability.

Ensure hosts are in the loop without creating friction in their workday.



72%

of tenants say a branded, digital-first guest experience is seen as a premium building amenity.

Source: BOMA

THE SECURITY TEAM EXPERIENCE

Security teams and operations staff are the unsung heroes of visitor management. To support them, a VMS must provide:

Real-time visibility into who is in the building and where they are supposed to be.

Access control integration to ensure guests only go where permitted.

Watchlist screening and identity verification for added protection.

Comprehensive logs and audit trails for investigations or compliance reviews.

Security needs tools that enhance their oversight without slowing down operations.

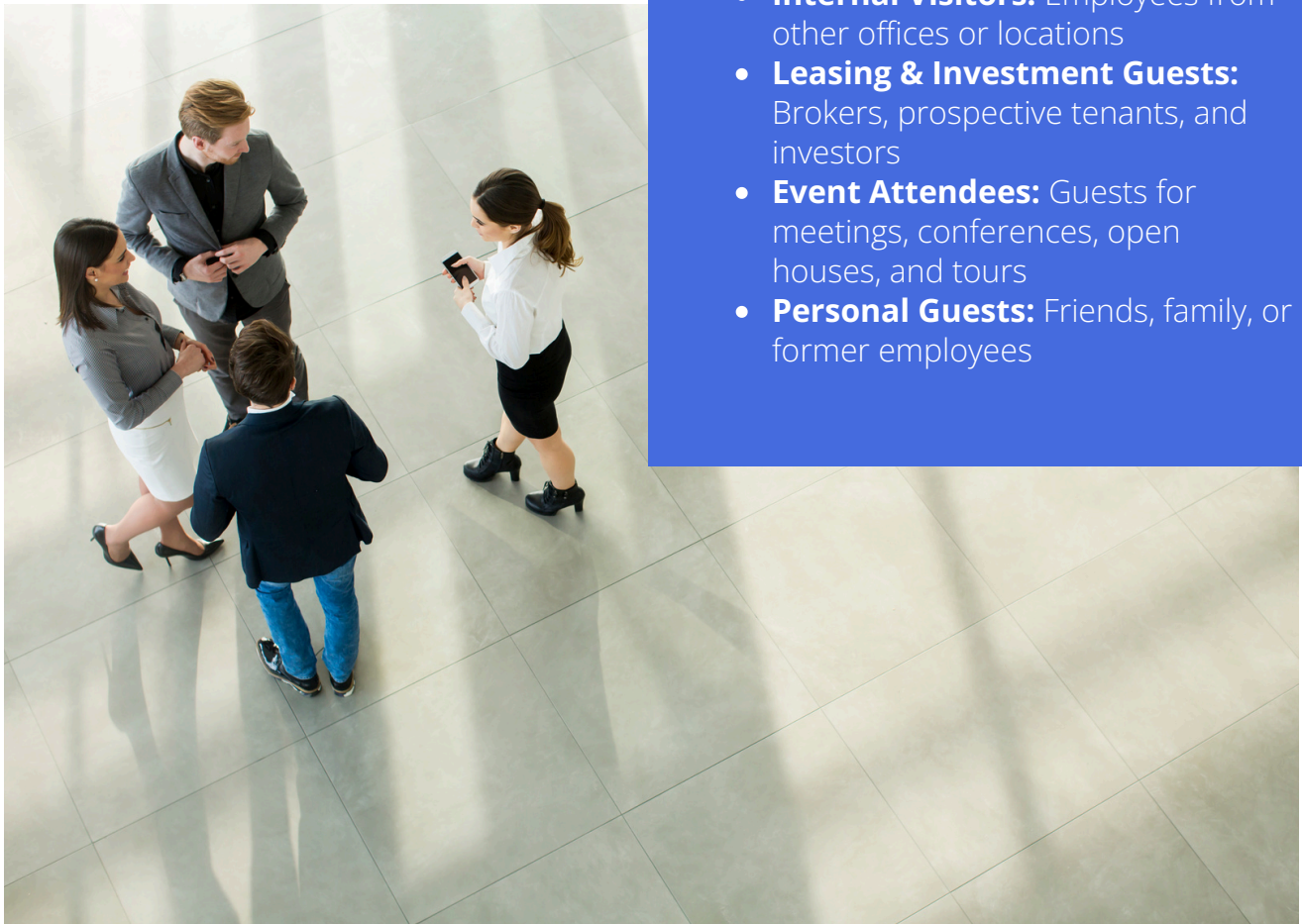


As you begin your selection process, keep these three primary user groups in mind. The most effective visitor management systems provide an easy check-in for guests, a streamlined process for hosts, and a command center for security.

WHO'S COMING THROUGH YOUR DOORS?

Modern buildings see a constant flow of diverse visitors, and each type carries different needs (and risks). Your selection process should choose a VMS that is ready for everyone:

- **Business Guests:** Clients, job candidates, consultants, and partners
- **Vendors & Service Providers:** IT support, maintenance crews, inspectors, and caterers
- **Internal Visitors:** Employees from other offices or locations
- **Leasing & Investment Guests:** Brokers, prospective tenants, and investors
- **Event Attendees:** Guests for meetings, conferences, open houses, and tours
- **Personal Guests:** Friends, family, or former employees



COMMON PITFALLS TO AVOID WHEN CHOOSING A VISITOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Even the best visitor management technology can fall short if the buying process overlooks key risks. Watch for these common pitfalls to ensure a smooth, successful deployment.

*** CHASING THE CHEAPEST OPTION**

A lower price tag may feel like a win but can cost you later. Watch for limited functionality, expensive add-ons, or switching fees that can quickly outweigh early savings.

*** SKIPPING CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

Even the most intuitive VMS needs precise rollout planning. Prioritize the time and effort to security staff, tenants, their employees, and frequent visitors to avoid a turbulent launch or low adoption.

*** SHORT-TERM THINKING**

Many buyers only evaluate based on their immediate requirements, but building needs can evolve. Look for a solution that can scale with added locations, new use cases, and growing traffic.

*** UNDERESTIMATING INTEGRATION COMPLEXITY**

Connecting to access control, identity providers, elevator dispatch, tenant apps, and other systems isn't always easily done. Skipping technical discovery early can lead to significant deployment delays, additional development costs, and budget surprises. For tenants, this also includes integration between their suite's access control and the base building systems.

*** GETTING LOCKED IN**

Some platforms trap your data or restrict integrations. Ensure your system offers API access and data export tools that don't tie you to proprietary hardware.

WHAT TO ASK BEFORE YOU BUY

Before committing to a visitor management system, it's critical to ask the right questions. Here are key areas to consider during vendor evaluation, helping you uncover hidden costs, technical gaps, and long-term limitations. Use it as a checklist to guide internal alignment, RFPs, and final decision-making.



PRICING & TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

Gain a full understanding of how pricing works, and what's hiding in the fine print. Clarify costs beyond the sticker price to avoid surprises down the road.

- * What pricing model do you use (per location, per visitor, or tiered plans)?
- * What's included in the base cost, and what features or services incur extra fees?

- * Are hardware, support, and updates bundled or billed separately?
- * How does pricing scale for multi-site or enterprise deployments?
- * What is the total cost estimate over 1–3 years, including implementation?



TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES & INTEGRATION

A VMS doesn't work alone. Ensure it plays nicely with your existing access control, tenant apps, and building systems.

- * How does the system integrate with access control and can it support multiple systems?
- * What credentials are supported (physical badge, QR codes, BLE, NFC/digital wallet)?
- * Do credentials auto-expire after a visit or if access is misused?
- * What happens if a visitor attempts to access unauthorized areas?
- * What's your uptime record? Do you offer SLAs?
- * How often are updates to the system deployed, and how are we notified?

SECURITY, PRIVACY & COMPLIANCE

Your VMS will handle sensitive data, so confirm that it's built with the proper protections and is audit-ready from day one.

- * Is the system GDPR, HIPAA, or SOC 2 compliant?
- * What PII is stored, and how long is it retained?
- * How is data encrypted, and who has access?
- * Can records be anonymized or auto-deleted?
- * What's your approach to data backup and disaster recovery?
- * What reports are available out of the box, and what metrics do they track?



LONG-TERM FIT AND SCALABILITY

Look beyond day one. Ask how the platform will evolve with your needs, support future tech, and scale across your portfolio.

- * What's on your 12 to 36 month product roadmap?
- * How will you support future needs like biometric access, advanced analytics, or AI?

- * Can the system scale across multiple sites, portfolios, geographies, or tenant types?

USER EXPERIENCE & ACCESSIBILITY

Evaluate whether the platform supports smooth, inclusive, and intuitive guest journeys.

- * Can visitors check in via phone, tablet, kiosk, or all of the above?
- * What is the workflow if a guest shows up but isn't pre-registered?

- * How do you support accessibility needs?
- * Can the system operate offline in case of connectivity outages?



ADMIN, TENANT & HOST TOOLS

In addition to the user experience of your visitors, internal teams need control and flexibility. Look for features that empower hosts, building managers, and security teams.

- * Can hosts manage their own invites and guest lists? Who else can see them?
- * Can workflows differ by tenant, visitor type, or floor?

- * How customizable are the UI, forms, and branding?
- * What onboarding is provided for building admins, tenants, and their employees?

IMPLEMENTATION & SUPPORT

Even great software can fall flat without strong deployment and support. Confirm that your vendor can guide you every step of the way.

- * What's included in onboarding, including hardware setup, training, and templates?
- * What's the typical rollout timeline per site or region?
- * What training do you offer for IT, security, and front desk teams?
- * What support channels are available, and what's your SLA?
- * Can you share references from similar customer deployments?



THE FUTURE OF VISITOR MANAGEMENT

Visitor management technology is becoming a core layer of building infrastructure that blends security, compliance, and experience in smarter, more connected ways. Here's what's coming next:

- * **Digital wallets** are quickly replacing physical credentials like plastic badges with credentials stored in Apple Wallet and Google Wallet for single-tap sign-in.
- * **ID verification** at entry, via scanned license or government ID, are essential in high-security and compliance-driven environments.
- * **Custom tenant workflows** that let each organization manage its own visitor flows, branding, and policies.
- * **Compliance-ready logs** with timestamped records and auto-retention are now expectations across regulated industries.
- * **Next-gen tech** like AI-driven behavior analysis, biometric authentication, and smart building integrations (e.g. elevators, HVAC) are quickly gaining adoption.

Tomorrow's visitor management systems won't just log entries—they'll enable safer, smarter, and more responsive buildings.

70%

of buildings will have visitor management systems with identity and building systems by 2027.

Source: Markets and Markets

CHOOSE A SYSTEM THAT WORKS TODAY— AND TOMORROW

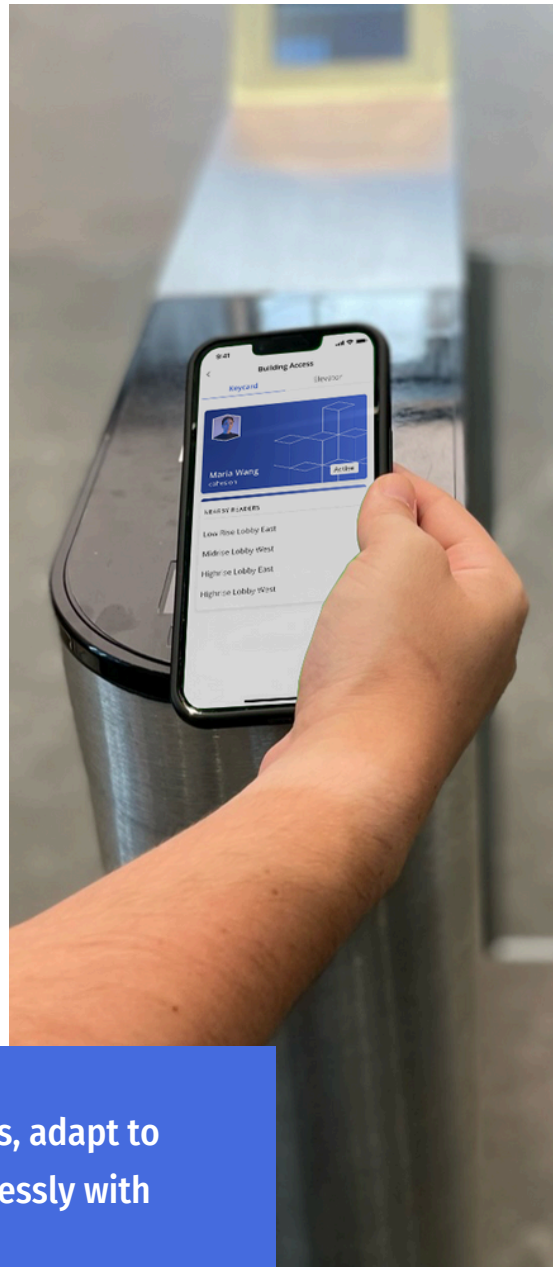
Selecting a visitor management system is a long-term investment in security, operations, and brand experience. The right platform doesn't just log guests. It streamlines workflows, reduces risk, and reinforces professionalism from the moment someone walks through the door.

By using the guidance in this buyer's guide, you're not just comparing features. You're building a strategy. One that avoids short-sighted decisions, anticipates future needs, and aligns with your broader goals.

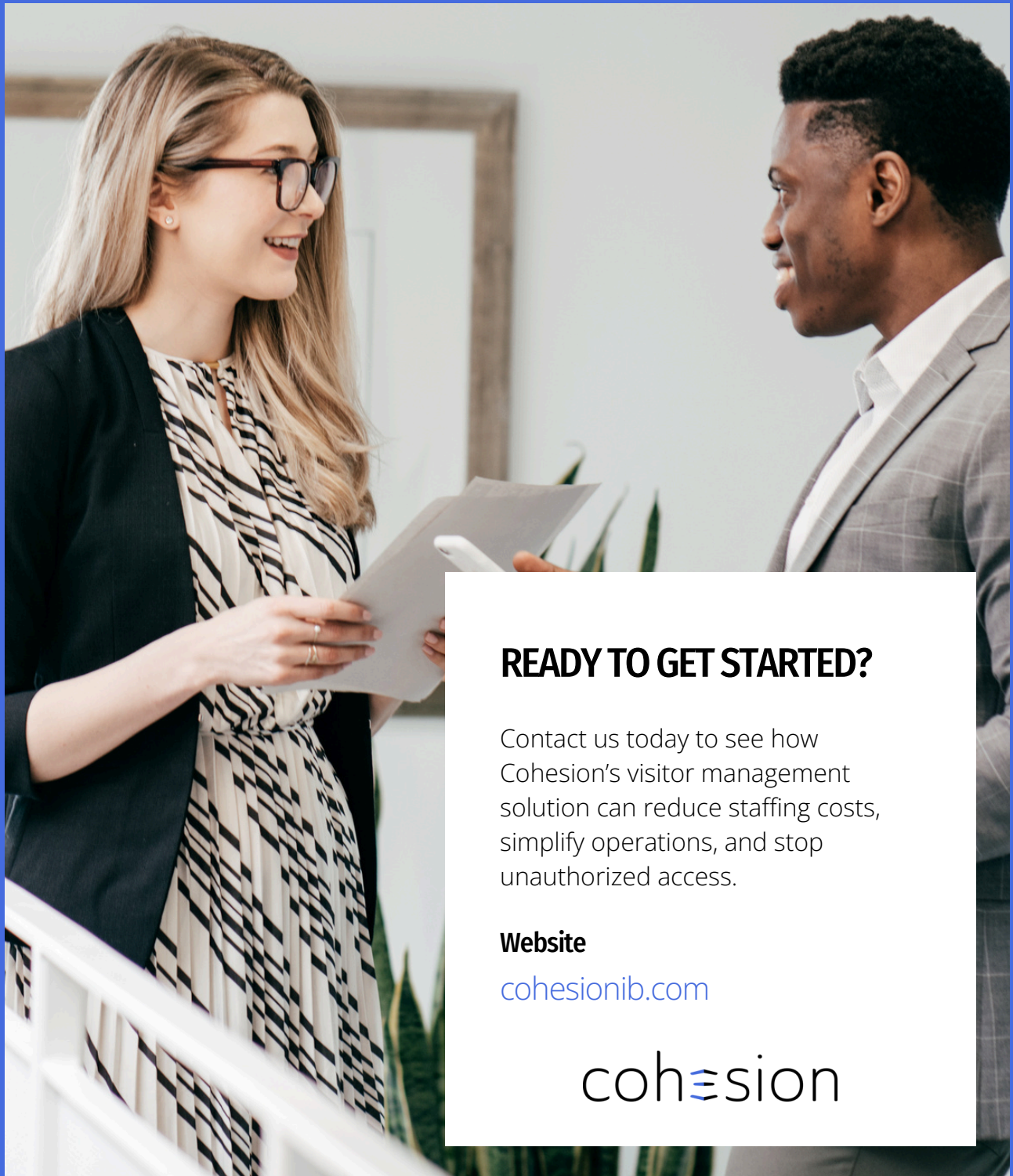
The best system will scale across properties, adapt to hybrid work dynamics, and integrate seamlessly with your existing tech stack.

Most importantly, it will make life easier for everyone: guests, tenants, hosts, security teams, and building operators.

Choose a system that earns its place in your building every single day.



LET'S GET TO IT.



READY TO GET STARTED?

Contact us today to see how Cohesion's visitor management solution can reduce staffing costs, simplify operations, and stop unauthorized access.

Website

cohesionib.com

cohesion