


Now is the Time to Plan for Success Post-COVID-19

Planning for a Consumer with New Boundaries

By: Peter Spoleti April 6, 2020



Be patient in the
storm and focus on the
sunshine after.

Retailers and restaurants are incredibly resilient.

With all the obstacles that have been thrown their way, the retail industry survives. Through economic downturns to the threat of a near apocalypse retailers and restaurants have shown resourcefulness and perseverance to overcome those obstacles and have proven their resilience and strength over and over again.

It's human nature that when faced with a crisis and hectic times it's just easier to hunker down ride out the storm, assess the damage and develop a plan of action after the storm as passed and the sun comes out. Instinct may tell us that in order to get through this we need to implement a short-term and reactionary plan of aggressive marketing and sales promotions. The smarter play however is to focus on the future and the new needs of your guests. This will get them back into the stores.

Irrespective of the overall devastation of this COVID-19 pandemic the costs of writing off the balance of this year and planning to hit the ground running in 2021 is massive. Instead of taking that hit **Start Planning Now.**

This pause in the economy is a tremendous opportunity to use this down time to re-evaluate your brand and your customers retail experience. Ask yourself what should be done to address the issues my customers are currently coping with and how will I become my customers go to solution when the sun is shining again. Plan now for were

you as a brand want to be on the other side of this crises. Both as a company and as your own department.

The following are some consumer-driven trends worth considering for post-COVID-19 retail environment.

Long-Term Retail Trends in the Post-COVID-19 World

Do the Right Thing

When this is over, and it will be over, there will be an expectation that brands did the right thing during this crisis. Those brands will be rewarded by the consumers. Tell the truth, value people over profits and use resources for the greater good. How brands are looked at *after* this pandemic will be heavily influenced by what they did *during* it. In other words, consumers tend to reward good corporate stewardship.

Plan Now for the New Retail Experience Customers Will Need

The consumer will want new experiences. Brands should be ready to meet those needs. Deliver new optimistic, entertaining, and fresh experiences. Retailers should prepare to offer experiences that feel characteristically like Spring. People will want a shift away from the despair. After being in isolation for weeks and months consumers will want to feel sunshine on their face. They will want to make themselves feel better, move beyond the crisis and nothing makes one feel better then buying new stuff and new experiences.

Expect a Consumer with New Boundaries

Consumers will be more sensitive to our mutual vulnerability and the added role retailers will have to take to keep everyone healthy. There will be an ongoing expectation to be clean. There may be new expectation of our personal spacing to others. COVID-19 will have an impact on how we feel about crowds. Cramming as many tables or seating into the allotted space may no longer be acceptable. Restaurants may have to revisit their floor plan. Consumers will want to completely reset the boundaries of their personal space.

What was Old May Not Be New

Will this new experience of social distancing drive more consumers to digital platforms? Consumers who never once used services like Uber eats, DoorDash, and non-contact delivery etc. have now adopted new behaviors during this pandemic. They will probably keep using them long after this crisis is over. Is your restaurant set up for that new reality? Unless brands plan to adapt to these new expectations and make their customers feel comfortable, they may go to a competitor who does.

The Post COVID-19 World

Retailers and restaurants will need to conform and adapt their operations and business plan to a post COVID-19 reality. It's no denying that the retail and restaurant environment was changing already. While these gradual behavior changes weren't unexpected it's unquestionable that there will be an acceleration of that timeline.

So how do we handle this rapid change? Don't panic. Your customers will still be there on the other side of this pandemic. And they'll be happy to see you. So, it's up to you to provide them with that new, safer, optimistic, entertaining, and fresh retail experience they'll be desiring.

Those companies planning now on how to address the needs of their consumers post COVID-19 will benefit. Don't write off 2020 it's still young. Think about your customers, welcome them back with that new experience that'll say, 'We understand and We're happy to see you back'.

We Can Help

We've been on our clients' side for the last 20 years through the good times and some very turbulent times. We have the knowledge to help get you started with planning and executing that new experience your customers are expecting. Our team collaborates with owners, corporations, contractors and architects to help with design, planning, budgeting and through every step of the preconstruction process. We're there with you to help welcome back your guests now.