

Are You Ready for the New Retail Normal?

How Kronos Task is helping retailers navigate these challenging times

As governments begin to ease social distancing guidelines aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19, retailers around the world must transition from crisis mode to something like business as usual. While this “new normal” is still unclear, new details emerge every day.

Our customer base is a diverse group of global retailers. We’ve listened carefully over the last 6 weeks as they’ve prepared for the challenges and opportunities to come. Some of our clients initially closed their stores and reduced their workforce, while others have remained open during the pandemic. Those that remained open will be at a distinct advantage, having had a crash course on how to alter their work policies, procedures and routines. All retailers, however, are facing important questions that will define their operations in the coming months.

To help the retail community rebuild and excel, we’d like to share some of the ideas that have come up in discussions with our clients. We’ve organized these observations into three broad themes, with key questions every retailer should be asking. It is our hope that these tips will be useful to your organization in the upcoming transition.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of retail associates and consumers will be the top priority as storefronts reopen. There is a laundry list of steps that must be taken in order to ensure the wellbeing of everyone involved. Those companies that do not address these important changes will lose the confidence of their customers.

Consider the following issues:

• Managing Customer and Associate Interactions

- What policies will you establish regarding Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)? Will masks and gloves be required or optional, and will your stores provide them?
- How will you facilitate proper hand hygiene? How many sanitization stations will you provide and where will you put them?
- How can you manage counter interactions to make your Pharmacy, Returns Area, Meat/Bakery/Deli/Seafood counters safe?
- When and how can you safely resume product demos and sampling?
- How will you layout your queueing process to maintain social distancing at each counter and checkout?
- Will you install plexiglass or glass checkout barriers, require distance or will you shift to more self-checkout lanes to keep checkout associates safe?

• Managing Customer Experience

- How will you adjust your shopping patterns to space customers out and limit interactions? Will you have limits to the number of shoppers allowed in the store at one time? Will you have directional, one-way aisles?
- Will you enable consumers to use touchless payment options, with no swiping of cards or PIN entry via touch? Will you even consider face-to-pay technology?
- How will you address parking areas? Will you create wider spaces or staggered parking to avoid crowding?
- How will you staff Shopping Cart/Basket return to ensure the consumer sees maximum effort being put into cleaning and disinfecting?

• Managing Communication

- How will you let associates and consumers know how they are being protected? Will you articulate your hygiene and cleaning policies openly?

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Speed of Service

It is clear that there will be a new level of expectation concerning the speed of service for retailers. Consumers will want to get in and out with minimal levels of interaction. Processes will need to be streamlined and touchless options will be required everywhere they are possible.

As you transition operations, ask yourself the following questions:

- What options will you offer for curbside pickup and drive-up service? How will you ensure these processes are smooth and safe?
- Can you reduce checkout interactions by enabling consumers to scan during the shopping process and exit with interaction-less checkout?
- What incentives will encourage high levels of online buying to reduce in-store traffic in the early days of reopening?
- How will you adjust your current customer loyalty programs to accelerate online buying?

Execution and Consistency

Customers have come to expect a level of execution and consistency that far exceeds what was seen in the marketplace as recently as this past January. They will be less forgiving of poor experiences. If you want to compete, you'll need to narrow the gap between your top performing associates and stores and those at the bottom of any key customer service metric.

It will be critical to measure the execution of the health and safety and service initiatives above to ensure that your brand maximizes its effectiveness. Communication at all of your organization levels will need to increase and the impact of that communication will need to be better than ever before.

To prepare all of your locations and associates for the emerging status quo, the following issues must be addressed:

- With fewer associates doing more things, personalization will be more important than ever. How will you target communications and tasks to the exact role intended?
- How will you leverage technology to enable virtual leadership? Can you manage store visits, instruction, coaching and performance reviews remotely?
- How will you track tasks so you know which associates and stores have completed the initiatives above?
- Do you have a robust validation process that ensures your most important initiatives are executed flawlessly? How will you obtain proof to reduce your risk?
- Can you gather real-time reporting and instantaneous feedback? This data will be the difference between those that move fast and those that lag.

In the conversations we have with our clients on these topics, the message is loud and clear. They are all adjusting on the fly, adapting to the ever-changing environment as new policies and guidelines are communicated by governments and stakeholders at every level.

**Together we will make it through these trying times...
and come out the other side stronger, wiser and more efficient.**

Ready to move your business forward?

Kronos can help. [Contact us today to learn how.](#)