



Retail Ready for the Holidays: Innovative Ideas

Provided by the Iowa Retail Initiative

Shoppers are looking for a traditional holiday shopping experience this year but they also want a safe and convenient way to check off all their wish-lists.



A recent survey by Google, [“How the pandemic may affect holiday shopping”](#), found that more than 1/3 of U.S. shoppers will not shop in store for Black Friday and half said the pandemic will affect how they shop for the holidays this year. The study also found the availability and local convenience has become a priority for shoppers. Additionally the survey found:

- Shopping local matters! 66% of shoppers plan to shop more at local small businesses.
- Almost 75% of U.S. shoppers said they will shop online more than they did in previous holiday seasons and will first browse for gift ideas online and not in-store.
- 47% of shoppers planned to use options to buy online and then pickup in-store or through curbside pickup

Top 10 innovative retail district tips for the holiday season

1. Provide a clean and safe shopping experience

Customers, when willing to shop in stores, are expecting safety standards are taken by the retailer and are more likely to purchase from a retailer they know is following safety precautions in-store. The [Iowa Department of Public Health](#) (IDPH) has guidance for cleaning and disinfecting your stores to help ensure your customers' safety.

2. Promote clean and safe shopping experiences

Make sure to communicate to your customers that you are taking those extra steps to make sure your store is safe. You can do this through signage both outside and inside your store. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) has free resources available specific to COVID-19.

3. Manage inventory closely

Since there is growing preference to shop locally, retailers need to know their product availability and make sure the best sellers are in stock. But do not over purchase inventory with the unknowns of COVID-19, try working with your vendors to keep inventories at optimal levels.

4. Appeal to shopping locally

Shoppers are making purchasing decisions based upon supporting local businesses. Now is the time to tell how your store supports the local community. These stories can become a part of the value-added component to your customers' holiday shopping.

5. Virtual window shopping

Customer shopping now often begins long before shoppers go into a store and this has become even more the shopping process. Stores are now experimenting with virtual meeting platforms, like Zoom, where store staff can take customers on a store tour and create conversations about their merchandise.



6. New heights of customer service

As customers are timid about entering retail stores, now is the time to expand your customer service offerings by providing such services as appointment-only times, curbside pickups, and virtual window shopping with in-store pickup.

7. Make holiday shopping exclusive

Provide exclusive shopping hours and events for those special customers to create holiday shopping cheer with special promotions such as free gift wrapping.

8. Specialty box sets

Explore cooperative sales with neighboring retailers to offer specialty gift sets that are distinctive to your retail district.

9. Segment sales and specials

Keep customers coming back and checking your store through limited availability products and products-of-the-week specials.

10. Utilize social media to highlight all of the above with your customers

To explore more ideas for your holiday shopping experiences here are some additional resources:

- <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street-center/2020/08/26/holiday-shopping-during-covid-what-should-main-str>
- <https://nrf.com/insights/holiday-and-seasonal-trends/winter-holidays/winter-holiday-faqs>
- <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/pandemic-holiday-shopping/>
- <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/retailers-get-ready-survey-shows-covid-19-impact-hasnt-disrupted-consumer-holiday-shopping-plans-301089520.html>
- <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/pandemic-holiday-shopping/>
- <https://www.psfk.com/2020/09/nine-retail-strategies-holiday-2020.html>

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