OPINION ❯

5 ways for retailers to fight the COVID-19 impact

With the supply chain and logistics industries facing the brunt of the coronavirus lockdown, retailers can use technology to fight the impact and aim for business as usual.

Kumar Vembu • **2 Stories**

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Coronavirus has created a new world order. Even as governments and medical organisations worldwide focus on damage control, people are adjusting to the new normal: work from home, social distancing, and staying through days and weeks.

Even as the supply chain and logistics industry face the brunt of the coronavirus lockdown, businesses are stepping up their efforts to respond to the pandemic and alleviate the fallout.

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The world may still be struggling to quell COVID-19, but retailers can use technology to fight its effect on their sales.

Here are five simple ways to do just that.

1. Let customers know that you're OPEN

Let's presume a retailer has opened the stores for customers, unlike some of the less agile competitors. As courageous and welcoming as it is, it is equally important that customers know that you are at their service now, more than ever.

Using tools for instant messaging service, notify your customers about your services, promotions or any vital information which they might be waiting for. Such instant messaging services make the ideal glue to stick to your customers in such trying times.

2. Preserve your efforts by taking orders online

The longer these challenging times persist, the tougher it will be to manage your labour. **Spend your time, money, and labour only on things that will bring good returns, in any form.** You might have started receiving orders via phone calls or WhatsApp texts already. Increasing customer demand will make it tedious to keep tabs on orders, especially if they are coming from several channels.

Be smart and preserve your limited staff for something that needs more attention because the process of order-taking could be simplified through integrated online ordering apps. Customers ordering products through mobile apps can be the single-most effective way of processing sales orders, saving a chunk of your time and labour.

The supply chain slowdown means that all the big online players are currently facing a massive shortage in stock and are unable to serve the customers adequately. Capitalise on this, serve your community by taking your business online, and build a strong relationship.

3. Attract customers with on-time, contactless deliveries

It is a given that consumers who order products online prefer doorstep deliveries at a preferred time. Act on this and start delivering products to your consumers, rather than encouraging walk-ins.

The lack of workforce or the skills of your workforce may challenge you the most in adopting delivery services. But integrated delivery and a payment management system can ease this. Service your customers with on-time deliveries while providing convenience to your delivery boys with the quickest route navigation and tracking facility. **Opt for contactless deliveries with digital payments.**

4. Stock only what is essential for your customers

It is time to give up routine and focus on crisis management. As days go by, logistics will be challenging and supplies will start to dwindle. This is exactly why we advise you to stop following your supply routine and stock only what consumers need.

Study the recent sales trend in your store and place orders with your suppliers accordingly. At the end of the day, having your stores open with lesser but essential products will be the best thing to do.

5. Operate from multiple service points to reach more customers

The demand for goods and services is not limited to just one place. Plan effectively to not just serve your community, but also multiple locations. Remember that a few stores are closing down just because they cannot cater to the demands of consumers of that locality now. Not only is this an opportunity for you to see revenue but to serve consumers who need your services.

An effective way to expand your boundary and operate from multiple service points is by doing van sales. With a few supermarket retailers doing it already, a handy mobile POS can help take your business with you, wherever you go.

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With COVID-19 making everyone feel powerless and uncertain, retailers can be the real difference makers, spreading hope and positivity and making the worldwide quarantine comfortable.

Edited by Teja Lele

(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of YourStory.)

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