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5 Ways Supermarkets & Grocery Stores Can Provide a Stress-Free Experience for Shoppers

An Essential Experience

It's safe to say that for customers around the globe, their day-to-day involves considerably fewer destinations. Due to recent regulations that aim to keep people safe and healthy, customers are social distancing, sheltering in place, and altogether avoiding public places and gatherings, save for a few destinations that have been deemed "essential."

Grocery stores and supermarkets are among the most important "essential" businesses, and it is therefore necessary for brands who are concerned with their customers' experiences to be equally concerned with their health. In fact, it is a brand's emphasis on convenience, cleanliness, and general safety that will make the biggest difference for customers in the current pandemic era—and beyond.

So, how can grocery and supermarket brands make sure their customers know that health and safety are a priority? After consulting with our experts, we've come up with five specific steps you can take to provide incredible, essential experiences:

STEP 1

Expanding Pickup and Delivery Options

Most brands had well-established pick up and delivery processes before the Coronavirus, but these have become more than options today; they have become a vital means for customers to receive the goods they need to get by.

In fact, according to research performed by our Strategic Services Team, 64% of customers noted they were using online order and delivery services more this month than any other time before. Additionally, 45% of the comments mentioned the need for "no contact" delivery options.

What does this mean for grocery and supermarket brands? They need to amp up their efforts on this front. Due to demand, many locations have been unable to keep up, so instead of seeing options for pick-up times, customers are seeing "option is unavailable" messages on their app or in their browser.

The easiest way to meet the demand is to divert employees that would be cashiers, stock workers, or who have less hours due to the pandemic to fulfill online orders. This is a win-win-win scenario—your stores meet the demand, employees keep vital working hours, and customers know that it is your priority to give them safe options.

STEP 2

Visible Cleanliness

This is perhaps the simplest, but most effective way to show customers your concern for their safety. When leaving their homes, customers are faced with many questions: *How do I know this environment is safe? Have these carts been cleaned? What about the items on the shelves?*

The reality is that customers do not know the answers to those questions unless they see items in the store being sanitized in front of their very eyes. It is therefore the job of grocery stores and supermarkets to show customers the additional steps they are taking to ensure the health of visitors.

Consider having an employee stand in front of the grocery carts and disinfect them before handing them off to incoming shoppers. This way, customers know their cart is safe to use. Also, consider having your stock employees wear protective gear such as gloves and masks while adding items to shelves. These simple visual clues make it clear to your shoppers that their health is your top priority.

STEP 3

Limited Entry for Expanded Safety

In times when it's business as usual, it would seem counterproductive to limit the amount of customers

in your store. In the Coronavirus era, however, this can help you keep customers coming back simply because they know that they will be safer from infection when shopping with you.

Industry giants such as Costco and Trader Joe's are limiting the amount of customers in their stores, but in two different ways. Costco is only allowing two visitors per party into their stores, making sure that crowding in aisles is kept to a minimum. Trader Joe's is helping to maintain social distancing in their stores by only allowing 30-40 customers (depending on store size) to shop at a time.

By making it easier for customers and employees to keep a safe distance from one another, grocery stores and supermarkets can prevent the spread of the virus and create a safe environment for everyone.

STEP 4

Special Considerations for the Most Vulnerable

Though we are learning more and more about COVID-19 each day, one fact that has been clear is that some parties are more vulnerable to infection and severe symptoms than others. Senior citizens and those with existing lung conditions are more at risk when going out into public, but they still need access to food and other goods.

This is why many stores such as Target, Walmart, Kroger and more are enacting "seniors-only" hours. For a designated time, store facilities are scrubbed down, then made available only to vulnerable populations. This is an effective way to ensure health and safety for those who need it most, but it is also a way for brands to show how much they care for customers.

STEP 5

Install Environmental Safeguards

Environmental reminders are a quick and effective way to help customers and employees keep safety parameters top of mind. Regulations like social distancing are highly unprecedented, and therefore it can be easy for customers to forget to stay six feet apart from other shoppers.

In order to help them stay mindful, many brands are posting reminders throughout the store. Some of the most effective include floor markers in the register lines that indicate to customers where they can stand to maintain social distancing, signs on displays that ask customers to stay back and not to touch products unnecessarily, and sneeze guards around the cash wrap to keep employees and customers safe.

We're All in This Together

If there is one silver lining we can all take away from this experience, it is that we have proven our ability as a society to work together toward the common good. Efforts to stay at home are vital to keeping our society safe, but we need to establish extra practices to maintain health and safety standards in essential businesses.



Grocery stores and supermarkets have the opportunity to take charge here by adapting their services to show a concern for public safety. Those who take on the challenge and show how much they care for their shoppers will move into the post-COVID world with a distinct advantage: increased customer trust and loyalty.

Looking for more advice on how to address your customer experience in the COVID-19 era? Check out this exclusive webinar with CX expert practitioners, ***"Managing the Customer Experience in a Time of Crisis."*** You can access it for free [here!](#)

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