



# **6 Ways To Take Your Customer's Experience to the Next Level This Holiday Season**

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## SANITIZATION STATIONS

As customer's head out and about to secure their holiday purchases, they are coming into contact with numerous unavoidable surfaces and crowds. To protect your customers and associates this holiday season, consider adding sanitization stations throughout your store. According to the 2020 "U.S. Grocery Shopper Trends" report released by The Food Industry Association, **57% of consumers say that keeping the store sanitized is a priority**, and **52% say that providing wipes for carts is a priority**.

While many retailers have already installed sanitizer dispensers and wipes at store entrances, take consumer protection to the next level by incorporating them throughout the store. By installing these stations in notably high touch places like produce, meat, and checkout, customers will have peace of mind that their purchases are clean and protected from outside contaminants

Along with hand sanitizer and wipes, consider adding gloves and masks for those that forgot to bring theirs along. Building on this, reassure customers that their health and safety is a top priority by featuring messaging regarding your store hygiene procedures in place. The same survey found that 54% of shoppers are concerned about being exposed to the virus from other shoppers, and **44% report that they worry about picking up the virus from store surfaces**.

Signage that makes mention to high-touch surfaces being regularly cleaned or nightly sanitizations of the store go the extra mile in providing an increased peace of mind to your customers.



## MERCHANDISE LAYOUTS

While customers are headed into your store expecting crowds this time of year, what they are not accounting for is extra crowding due to poorly executed layouts. While physical limitations on store floor plans cannot be avoided, make the most of your space by strategically using merchandisers.

Against the common merchandising strategy of trying to keep customers in stores for longer periods of time, customers are trying to spend as little time as possible in your stores to avoid crowding. Because of this, **less is more** as customers try to stealthily navigate your aisles while remaining socially distanced.

The best way to find the right balance for your store is to do a **full customer walkthrough**.

What catches your eye as being out of place or cluttered? If there were a crowd of people in the store, what would be preventing a better flow of traffic? What hot items, such as turkeys or cranberry sauce, could be moved to be in more accessible areas to prevent crowding? Continue asking yourself this set of questions as you move throughout the store and to checkout. Although lines at checkout will be unavoidable, what can be moved or eliminated to allow for a better flow of socially distanced traffic?

By taking the time to put yourself in your customer's shoes instead of relying on old methods of merchandising, you will **maximize the space in your store layout while better satisfying customers**.



## OFFER FREEBIES

It is no secret that we all love freebies. While COVID-19 may have shifted the typical process of receiving samples, **it did not eliminate customer's desire for them!** Acting as a strong means of allowing customers to try something new, samples have long been a staple of weekend grocery trips. Especially around the holidays, samples offer the opportunity for retailers to upsell additional items to complete their customer's entertaining spread.

Innovative retailers are viewing this post-COVID world as the opportunity to effectively mobilize sampling and streamline it into a more modernized process. Being mindful of safety hazards that are presented by sampling, such as disposal of single-use cups, plates and other serving instruments; the safety of sampling workers; and the importance of discouraging crowding around sampling areas, retailers must find unique ways around this.

For example, some retailers are handing out pre-packaged samples of a single serving of a product, such as oatmeal, instead of preparing it for the customer. The customer then receives a coupon for the product alongside the sample that encourages a future purchase. The associate who is handing out the samples and coupons is in a mask and gloves, further protecting both the associate and customer.

Other ideas include utilizing existing store loyalty programs to send customers a coupon for the product while also including content for ideal preparation, reviews, and more. **The key to this strategy is targeting the product based on customer's previous purchases versus casting a wide net to all consumers.** This will increase the likelihood of purchase while decreasing overhead associated with the coupon, all while delighting the customer with a product picked just for them.



## TARGETED OFFERS

One of the biggest challenges facing grocers today is the ability to engage and retain customers online, particularly the "connected customer." Competing with the likes of digital giants like Amazon, retailers must deliver the level of personalization these customers have learned to expect when shopping for their groceries. In fact, when surveyed by Valassis, **roughly 80% of those surveyed said a coupon would influence them to purchase a brand they typically would not buy.**

While couponing in general has been a tried and true strategy for grocery retailers, targeted offers take your customer's experience to the next level. Rather than send a cookie-cutter offer to all customers, targeted offers allow retailers to build on their existing relationships with their customers by sending messaging and offers based on the customer's unique shopping behaviors.

According to a study by Psychology Today, By choosing a purchase that requires savings, consumers feel they have control over the discount, which nurtures **"smart shopper feelings."** By taking these savings to the next level with targeting, customers feel like you are curating an experience specifically tailored to their needs. Link your current coupon program with your existing customer loyalty program and POS feed to have insight into what your shoppers are buying, when they are buying, and when to send the offers.





## SELF-CHECKOUTS

Self-checkouts were well on the rise before COVID-19, however **now more than ever customers are looking for contactless payment and checkout options.** According to London-based research firm RBR, the self-checkout momentum will continue, with global installations expected to triple by 2025 to surpass 1.1 million.

As self-checkouts become more of a basic offering versus new innovation, it is hard to imagine how self-checkouts can be a tool to delight customers, but **indeed they can.** Going beyond the checkout, innovative retailers have begun to reevaluate their self-checkout flows to better enhance their efficiencies. Walmart, for example, has recently begun to expand their self-checkout zones with increased corral sizes to allow customers to pack more groceries before needing to reload their carts.

Meijer has also invested in Shop & Scan Technology that allows customers to shop and checkout on their mobile device, allowing customers to avoid the checkout zone all together. Barcode scanning apps and hand-held scanners have become increasingly popular in allowing shoppers to personalize their customer journey. Knowing that there are no lines to wait in at checkout, customers are more likely to **spend additional time** perusing the merchandise.

# 1.1M

ACCORDING TO LONDON-BASED RESEARCH FIRM RBR, THE SELF-CHECKOUT MOMENTUM WILL CONTINUE, WITH GLOBAL INSTALLATIONS EXPECTED TO TRIPLE BY 2025 TO SURPASS 1.1 MILLION



## CONTACTLESS SOLUTIONS

The early days of contactless payment solutions may have arisen out of necessity, but ongoing shifts in consumer behavior suggest that this is one convenience that is definitely here to stay. According to recent reporting from McKinsey & Company, groceries are one of a select number of essentials where growth in **online shopping is expected to exceed 35% moving forward.**

Instead of looking at the shift to contactless solutions in the grocery space as a hurdle that you have to climb over, look at it as an opportunity to stand out from your competition and meet the evolving needs of customers.

Offering digital receipts allows your brand to promote a true start-to-finish contactless payment experience. With an optimized email receipt design based on your customer's needs, you can enact a true omnichannel strategy, delivering the right content to your customers when **they are the most engaged.**

Digital receipts also offer a great channel to deliver targeted offers and announcements to your customers **right in the palm of their hand.**

For those customers that want to maintain a truly contactless experience shopping at your store, curbside programs are essential in staying on top of your consumer's preferences. By investing in curbside communications, you are keeping your brand consistent across all touchpoints to **deliver a seamless experience to your customers.**



# TAKEAWAYS

SANITIZATION STATIONS

MERCHANDISE LAYOUTS

OFFER FREEBIES

TARGETED OFFERS

SELF-CHECKOUTS

CONTACTLESS SOLUTIONS

While this upcoming holiday season holds a lot of unknowns, being proactive versus reactive is key in delighting customer's and exceeding their expectations. By implementing the above mentioned strategies, retailers can see success beyond the holiday season, including:

- Collecting More Customer Information
- Supporting Digital Advertising Strategies
- Generating Incremental Revenue
- Keeping Customers Informed
- Keeping Customers & Associates Safe
- Monetizing a Leading Communication Channel

Given the uncertainty of tomorrow, now is the perfect time to have a strategy in place. Ready to take the next steps in delighting your customers? Contact us today!



## **DIGITAL RECEIPTS**

Essential tier is free forever!



## **CURBSIDE & QUEUE MANAGEMENT**

Pilot free for 6 months



## **ORDER TRACKING**

Pilot free for 6 months

**Contactless Communications, Risk Free**

# Contact Us To Learn More

Work with flexEngage to create custom contactless and curbside solutions that can help delight customers this holiday season. From e-receipts and personalized offers to totally streamlined curbside communications, we can help make sure that your store doesn't just survive the transition—but thrives because of it.



**EMAIL**

[hello@flexengage.com](mailto:hello@flexengage.com)

**-OR-**

**VISIT**

[www.flexengage.com](http://www.flexengage.com)