



A RETAIL ROADMAP

10 Action Steps to help retailers review, react & redefine their businesses in response to COVID-19

By [skulQ](#) in partnership with [Retail Minded](#)

Retail has historically evolved over time with challenges helping to shape it's inevitable change. Yet now more so than ever as a result of COVID-19, retail is experiencing a transformation in an accelerated speed unlike any other time in modern history. With retailers having to navigate unexpected twists and turns in their connectivity to consumers, business leaders are encouraged to explore roads that – for many of them – have been less travelled... and often provide bumps along the way.

Among the many discoveries in which retailers need to explore as they look ahead amidst and post COVID-19 include:

- Business Operations
- Customer Relationships
- Curbside & In-Store Pick Up
- Customer Communication
- Employee Management
- Inventory Management
- Solution Providers
- Vendor Partnerships

Despite the unexpected roadblocks and sudden dead-ends that retailers around the world have experienced due to COVID-19, there is a lot to look forward to in retail. Like any journey, however, it will take time and effort to reach new target destinations. To help, the following 10 action steps provide retailers a roadmap to review, react and redefine their businesses in response to COVID-19.

ACTION STEP 1: Review what your business was like prior to COVID-19.

ACTION STEP 2: Reconsider what your business now needs to be.

ACTION STEP 3: React to the new realities of retail.

ACTION STEP 4: Reimagine selling avenues.

ACTION STEP 5: Reidentify customer communication & connectivity.

ACTION STEP 6: Reconnect with industry partners, solution providers & more.

ACTION STEP 7: Realign with employees.

ACTION STEP 8: Reinvent your retail goals.

ACTION STEP 9: Repurpose your brick & mortar footprint.

ACTION STEP 10: Reward yourself on a job well done!

Ready to explore your business, the future of retail and how customers want to be connected? The journey has already begun... but now is your chance to take control by getting in the driver's seat.

Ready?

Set...

Let's Go!

ACTION STEP 1

Review what your business was like prior to COVID-19

Reflecting on past business operations provides the chance to rediscover what was successful, what wasn't, where opportunities were gained and where opportunities were missed. This is among the most critical journeys retailers need to make as they begin to look ahead for their businesses. Among the ways in which retailers can do this entails them looking backwards, however.

To help create a roadmap that will lead retailers to future success, it's important to first identify the following:

- 1. Where was the majority of time spent on your business operations?** Whether you own a single store, operate multiple storefronts or sell inventory exclusively online, there has undoubtedly been a lot to do on your to-do-list. Keeping this in mind, retail decision makers must be intentional with their time in order to be both productive and profitable. Ask yourself, where was your time spent? And was it productive?
- 2. What were the strongest categories of inventory sold in your sales history prior to COVID-19? What were the weakest?** Reflecting on this data, also consider what vendors performed better than others, what items were your top sellers and what items did not perform as expected.
- 3. What percentage of your sales were due to staple items versus statement items?** In other words, has your business been more dependent on trends or seasonal goods or does it lean heavier towards staple inventory such as a white t-shirt is to a statement item such as a graphic t-shirt.
- 4. How much of your operational budget was spent on employees?** This reflection process should include contract workers and internal hires alike, with an emphasis on understanding how their investment impacted the sales and operations of your retail business.
- 5. How much of your operational budget was spend on marketing?** From in-store marketing to local reach marketing such as advertising in publications to online marketing such as Facebook ads, review what your spend was here prior to COVID-19. Then take an analysis on the return of investment these experiences gave you, narrowing in on the value they added to your store visibility and sales.

Throughout your entire review process, make sure numbers and the data in which they reveal bring clarity to your understanding of your unique business. Beyond store data generated from sales, you should also review the data generated from social media, email marketing, google analytics and all other digital touchpoints that reveal insight from both your employee and customer engagement. Collectively, these efforts will better position you to move ahead in your journey of achieving store success in our new world of COVID-19 centric retail.

“The foundation of retailers must be to strengthen balance sheets and have adequate cash flow. The core to surviving, however, is to accept that even very good is not good enough anymore. Brands must be truly remarkable.”

Steve Dennis, [Forbes Contributor](#) and Author of *Remarkable Retail: How to Win and Keep Customers in the Age of Digital Disruption*

ACTION STEP

Review data! From inventory to social media to email marketing to customer management and more, data is available to offer clarity to your business. The catch? You need to be proactive in reviewing your data in order to become profitable when it comes to reacting to it.

ACTION STEP 2

Reconsider what your business now needs to be

By reflecting on what “was” helps position retailers to now understand what “is”. From customer support to inventory management to packaging best practices and more, there are seemingly countless details for retailers to evaluate. To help move forward in your own efforts of re-considering what retail looks like for your unique business, consider what lessons were gained and continue to be gained as a result of COVID-19. Among them include the need for being available to customers despite roadblocks along the way.

BigCommerce, a technology solution for retailers to reach consumers online, believes that people have approached this period of isolation and uncertainty with their shopping behaviors.

“Humans respond to crises in different ways. When faced with an uncertain, risky situation over which we have no control, we tend to try whatever we can to feel like we have some control,” Susan Meyers explains on behalf of [BigCommerce](#).

Keeping this in mind, among the avenues in which customers have control is shopping online – which is available to consumers at their leisure 24|7 no matter what challenges, chaos or crises such as COVID-19 may be taking place in the world. Yet being online alone will not connect retailers to customers. Having an online strategy in place that meets your customer expectations, however, will help you accomplish retail success despite the challenges, chaos or crises going on in the world.

To help bring online recognition and customers to your store, ask yourself the following three questions.

- **Are you actively managing your online review profiles?** With a reported [57% of consumers](#) saying they gain confidence in digitally native brands because of their online customer reviews and online brands also benefiting from reviews, making sure you

have updated review site information is a must. Yelp, Facebook Reviews and Google Reviews are among the top review site destinations, but a quick Google search can help you identify anywhere reviews of your store might be available. Make sure you provide consistent store information – including contact details and store hours – on each site and update them as needed if these details change, such as they did during COVID-19.

- **Do you have a branded website?** Incorporating a website that welcomes e-commerce sales – whether through a custom made e-commerce site or through platforms that include BigCommerce, Shopify and Woo Commerce – can extend your brand visibility and sales. Plus, having an online store – even if you have a brick and mortar business – helps you move inventory faster and when put in times of crisis, such as COVID-19, allows you to keep inventory moving despite roadblocks to your physical environment.
- **Are you active on social media?** Leverage social media destinations to engage with existing customers and potential customers. From entertainment to news to communication to shopping, social media provides retailers countless reasons to actively be using it. Plus, it provides data that can help retailers be more precise and profitable in their future marketing efforts.

“Retail requires more than just making transactions. It demands processes that help merchants make data-driven decisions that translate to stronger customer experiences. As commerce continues to re-open, evolve and adjust as a result of COVID-19, these processes will prove more important than ever before. Having data-driven intelligence that leads decision makers to make necessary changes to their business operations – including inventory, staffing, marketing and more – will be a core aspect in the future success of retail businesses.”

Peter Dougherty, Senior Director of Global Partnerships for Lightspeed

ACTION STEP

Reconsider your competition, customers, inventory, physical footprint, digital footprint and marketing efforts. By leveraging the data revealed during the review process of your business, you can then reveal what opportunities you have moving forward in each of this important avenues for your business.

ACTION STEP 3

React to the new realities of retail

[Two recent consumer surveys](#) conducted by Arlington Research and PFSweb's (NASDAQ: PFSW) operations business unit, identified that seven in ten consumers *still* expected delivery times within a week or less during the COVID-19 lockdown. Additionally, these same surveys revealed:

- Social distancing and the COVID-19 Pandemic have encouraged over 6 in 10 consumers (63%) and 75% of Millennials to buy goods online that they had not considered buying online before the COVID-19 Pandemic vs. 39% of UK consumers and 52% of UK Millennials.
- 55% of US Consumers have bought more products online from 1+ category during the COVID-19 Pandemic vs. 53% of UK Consumers.
- Over 7 in 10 Consumers in both the US and UK (71%) expect delivery within a week or less during the COVID-19 Pandemic vs. 83% in the US normally (90% in the UK not during COVID-19).
- Millennials are the most demanding age group with 24% currently in the USA (19% in the UK), expecting delivery in 24 hours or less vs. 26% in the US normally (21% in the UK not during COVID-19).

Keeping these considerations in mind, it's fair to say that knowing who your customers are, what they want and connecting to them 24/7 is no longer an option but a necessity. In fact, [71% of consumers](#) said a memorable online experience would encourage them to shop at a brand's brick-and-mortar store.

As you drive forward into 2020, recognize that change is inevitable. What's to come may be unexpected, but like many journeys there are often positive surprises along the way.

“Businesses that are coming out on top during reopening are the ones who are making safety their priority. These are the retailers who are able to adapt responsively to product, workforce, partner, and operational needs during and after COVID-19. The basic principles of safety will not change, but the strategies and tactics deployed must. While there is always the risk of doing something wrong, there is a greater

danger in doing nothing. Organizations that remain committed to the pursuit of safety excellence have been proactively examining the best case, worst case, and most likely scenarios as they reopen. You don't have to choose between making a living, and keeping your workers and customers safe – you can do both. It just takes careful monitoring and quick reactions.”

Bob Butler, General Manager of Americas for Safety Culture.

ACTION STEP

React to retail's new realities and your own new realities. Combining industry expectations in combination with your specific needs, limitations, opportunities and more will put you in the driver's seat versus passenger. Leverage data, customer sentiment, industry best-practices and inventory management to truly take control of your retail business.

ACTION STEP 4

Reimagine selling avenues

Leading up to COVID-19, many retailers had yet to incorporate an omnichannel strategy despite the push for it in recent years. Others, however, were well integrated online with selling avenues overlapping from their own website, marketplace sites such as eBay and Amazon and for many, brick and mortar stores, as well. So when retail came to a screeching, unexpected halt due to COVID-19, these retailers were better positioned to take the lead and capture sales online. Yet shifting gears was not so easy for those who had yet to implement a stronger retail strategy.

COVID-19 has accelerated the need for retailers to move their physical inventory online in order to take advantage of curbside pickup.

Questions you may have:

- Can I get all my inventory listed on my current website with no ecommerce set up? Yes.
- If I have no website, can I still do curbside pick up? Yes.

skulQ can support you with any of the following challenges:

- I am sitting on inventory and need to sell it using an Ecommerce website, but I have no budget to build a website or way to display inventory online.
 - I want my customers to be able to order online and curbside or instore pick up. I need a platform to add these technical capabilities fast.
 - I want my inventory online for customers to view, reserve, and then pick up.
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The lack of ability to shift gears – or lack of financial resources caused by slower sales – shouldn't impact the ability to bring their customers the most compelling online experience possible. Merchants have the ability to update their online stores more easily than ever thanks to commerce platforms that make it nearly turn-key, ultimately allowing them to focus time and energy on other areas of the business that could drive revenue and customer experience, including:

- BOPIS (Buy Online, Pick-Up In-Store)
- Curb-side Pickup
- Enhanced Shipping Options
- Social Media Sales
- Mobile Orders

And not to be ignored here in every avenue of sales is good, old fashioned customer care! Personalization is key. In fact, in a recent report from Avionos, [36% of customers](#) revealed they expect personalized product recommendations on website homepages, up from 28% in 2019. This increased expectation of customized product choices and care is a critical component to those retailers who excel online versus those who are leaving dollars in the dust. Another key component? Payment options.

As customers cross lanes and take their own twists and turns as shoppers, welcoming payments that may not be a traditional credit card is essential, as well. Among them include:

- Installment Payment Options such as Klarna, QuadPay, AfterPay
- Apple Pay
- Google Pay
- Amazon Pay
- Stripe
- Square
- Venmo

“Retailers should definitely consider building out an omnichannel retail strategy that goes beyond brick and mortar, as right now, not all shoppers are going to want to return to in-store shopping due to health and safety concerns. This means adding an ecommerce/online sales channel, leveraging social media to drive sales such as Instagram Shopping offers and more. It’s important to provide customers options right now.”

Kaleigh Moore, Forbes contributor

ACTION STEP

Looking to simplify your online store management? Retailers can simplify their brand’s ability to quickly build new and edit existing webpages with commerce based platforms that have stores ready to go with customized options available. Drag-and-drop blocks of content called widgets – including individual products, carousels, text blocks, branded images and video, promotional banners, buy buttons, blocks of custom HTML and more – make it easy for retailers to make these sites their own, expanding their opportunity to capture sales along the way.

Companies to consider in your search for selecting a commerce platform include:

- Woo Commerce
- Shopify
- Big Commerce
- skulQ Cart

ACTION STEP 5

Reidentify customer communication and connectivity

Consumers have heightened expectations due to COVID-19 and their concerns need to be retailer concerns. Strengthening customer communication can help ease some of the worries customers have when it comes to engaging in stores, purchasing products, exchanging payments, receiving packages, interacting with store employees and more. The path to purchase, after all, is simply not what it used to be and thus, retailer’s need to proactively communicate

with their customers in order to gain trust from their customers. Among the ways to do this include:

- Increase communication across digital avenues to connect with consumers 24/7
 - Social Media
 - Email Marketing
 - Online Review Sites
 - E-Commerce Site
 - Marketplaces
- Strengthen in-store signage with clear and concise details about updated store policies
 - Repeat signage in multiple spots in order to increase customer connectivity
 - Provide signage both in-store and via storefront windows / door as necessary
 - Create signage specific to COVID-19 that stands out from regular signage
- Incorporate a local press strategy to reach consumers about how you are re-opening and re-connecting with customers amidst COVID-19
 - Share press release with local media by contacting them via social media or email
 - Offer insight on store best practices due to COVID-19 and encourage local media to support local businesses via press
 - Reach out to radio, television, newspapers, publications, bloggers and local organizations to increase chance of more visibility

Leveraging these multiple destinations to communicate with customers provides retailers the chance to offer clear and concise details on everything they need to know amidst and post the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Social distancing guidelines
- In-store customer spacing and flow directions
- In-store occupancy limitations
- BOPIS, curbside pick-up and delivery details
- Limitations in inventory
- Health & safety expectations
- Local mandates including masks having to be worn
- Updated store hours
- Updated return policy

“During the early phase of openings it will be critical to demystify the experience for customers, whether it’s for curbside pick-ups or buy-online and pick-up in store. Brands will need strategies to be effective in explaining what one can expect is critical in easing anxiety and putting customers in the right mindset. They need to find ways to proactively communicate when a product is ready for pick-up, how to return items and what is available in-store. Queue management will be crucial - it can be the differentiator that determines whether or not a customer wants to come back. Don’t lean into safety at the sacrifice of brand, be sure to layer on your “voice” when creating your messaging plan. Openings need to be safe but they also need to be human. Shopping is an emotional experience, customers will gravitate to brands that deliver that.”

Melissa Gonzalez, CEO of The Lionesque Group and Principal at MG2

ACTION STEP

How have you actively communicated with your customers throughout COVID-19? Evaluate what your strategies – or lack of – have been, then proactively create a calendar specific to customer communicate to help keep you on track with connecting to your audience. Using email marketing, social media, in-store communication and your own website, identify what you want to tell them, when you will tell them and ways to make your voice stand out among the busy streets of retail, so to speak. These proactive actions will help ensure you don’t lose sight of your customers who must remain a priority during every step you take towards strengthening your retail business.

ACTION STEP 6

Reconnect with industry partners, solution providers and more

Gaining clarity on vendor terms, service provider contracts, partner integration opportunities and more can help retailers both streamline and ease their operations, overhead and overall spend. The challenge to this, however, is taking the time to get these connections made. Allocating time, however, is what will make a difference.

To help identify the time and actions you need to reconnect with industry partners, identify the following:

1. Who are your current partners for inventory management? Shipping? CRM? Packaging? E-commerce? Parcel auditing? Vendors?
2. Who are your contacts at each?
3. When was the last time your contracts were reviewed?
4. What updated features do your partners now offer in response to COVID-19?
5. How may these updates benefit you?

Reach out to your partners, then proactively identify ways you can reduce your overhead with each of them without eliminating their value or services. For vendors, this may mean adjusting ship dates or canceling items. For solution providers, it may mean welcoming new integrations into your strategies to help ease expenses and introduce selling opportunities. The key is taking the time to identify how each partner can bring you added benefits to your business. Ask them – point blank – the following to get the opportunities rolling

1. What updated features or services does your company offer in response to COVID-19?
2. How can I reduce my spend with your business without compromising your services / inventory?
3. Are there opportunities to enhance my business I may not be familiar with?
4. What new integrations have you introduced to your company that I should be familiar with?
5. What other ways can you support me?

“Running a retail business requires countless partners, providers and resources in order to operate at its best. Technology providers should make these integrations available to merchants, allowing them to enhance their operations through marketing, loyalty, CRM, analytics, scheduling, payments, invoicing and more. When seeking technology partners, be sure to review the integrations they currently offer, as well.”

Peter Dougherty, Senior Director of Global Partnerships for Lightspeed

ACTION STEP

Reach out to the technologies in which you are currently using – such as your POS provider, parcel auditing companies, email marketing solutions, CRM companies, e-commerce solutions and more – than identify what they have done to enhance retailers amidst and post COVID-19. You may be surprised to learn they have introduced new partnerships that align with your updated goals, or they have provided alternative payment options due to COVID-19. Being proactive in reaching out to these partners can help your company be more active in your immediate retail journey.

ACTION STEP 7

Realign with employees

At the core of every business are the people who represent it. And while inventory, customers, operations and marketing contribute to brand success, the reality is it takes leadership and a collective team of employees to truly bring a brand to life. Keeping this in mind, it's critical to consider the importance that each and every employee has on your business vitality – particularly during a crisis such as COVID-19.

To boost your team morale and productivity alike, transparency and education is a must. Among the considerations in which you need to inform your employees on include:

- Transitioning employees to understanding updated in-store procedures, including but not limited to return-policies, fitting room policies and altered store hours
- Informing and educating employees of newly introduced services such as curbside pick-up, local delivery options, enhanced BOPIS strategies and more
- Educating employees on new safety standards for customers and employees alike, as well as introducing any updates to what paid-time off, sick-leave or other scheduling variations may look like.

Finally, remember that transparency and education does not present themselves easily. Having consistent, regular communication avenues between management and employees is essential. Ways to regularly communicate with store staff include:

- Internal store newsletters
- Weekly or monthly meetings

- Team building events held bi-annually
- Private Facebook page
- Apps unique to your store

The National Retail Federation’s “Operation Open Doors” was created to support retailers in their efforts of employee management due to COVID-19, as well as the re-opening of retail at large. As you aim to align your employees with your company’s new strategies, goals, expectations, safety standards and more as a direct response to COVID-19, explore this checklist to help.

[Explore National Retail Federation’s Checklist Here.](#)

ACTION STEP

Executing employee reviews is a positive way to share constructive feedback with your team while also gaining insight from employee perspectives. As an added bonus, employee reviews offer a chance to eliminate misunderstandings of staff expectations, provides a chance to identify new goals for team members and boost overall team morale. To help your retail business excel, introduce bi-annual reviews to your business if you are not doing them already.

ACTION STEP 8

Reinvent your retail goals

Let’s face it – starting a retail business is one thing, but growing and scaling a retail business requires an entirely different path, especially following a pandemic like COVID-19. Keeping that in mind, there’s one question you need to answer.

Are you satisfied with the efforts you’ve made to continue and even increase sales despite COVID-19?

As you look ahead into 2020, consider ways you can reinvent your retail business in order to find success in years to come. Among the avenues to do this include the following:

- **Introduce white label manufacturing to your retail strategy.** White label products

are sold by retailers with their own branding and logo, however the products themselves are manufactured by a third party. As a retailer, this allows you to gain stronger margins on your inventory and create products that are exclusive to your stores. This also encourages you to shift your inventory dollars, ultimately shifting your inventory which you should actively be following via an inventory management software such as [skulQ](#).

- **Strengthen your retail supply chain efforts.** According to a study from the Institute for Supply Management (ISM), nearly [75 percent of U.S. businesses](#) have experienced supply chain disruption because of COVID-19. This is a major issue that collectively impacts inventory, operations, marketing and of course, sales. Yet with challenges come opportunities and now is your chance to evaluate and react to ways you can improve your supply chain efforts. From where you source inventory and store supplies to how much stock you need on-hand to introducing drop-shipping on select items to the transportation and parcel choices you depend on, review and then react to how you can improve your supply chain system. Another tip? Plan for disruption in your supply chain to happen again because if COVID-19 taught us anything, it's that you need to be prepared for the unexpected.
- **Stay ahead of consumer demands.** Unpredictable customer expectations were generated due to COVID-19, but warning signs of consumer needs became available early on. This lesson is a reminder to retailers that tracking and analyzing data – particularly inventory – is essential in reacting to real-time customer demands. From current marketplace trends to your unique customer data intelligence to local customer behavior insight and more, your goal is to have the ability – both financially and operationally – to shift gears across all avenues in order to more comfortably adjust to consumer wants and needs. Having the ability to make quick changes is key.

“Retailers have to be brutally honest about the realities they face, including the relative strength of their business model, their financial health and flexibility, the substantial uncertainty of what the future looks like and, therefore, the range of potential outcomes that they must plan for as we move into this brave new world. Our goals should be to build from the customer up. We need a deep understanding of our various key customer segments, various purchase journeys and how they are changing in light of COVID-19. Armed with this knowledge, retailers can surgically focus their efforts on eliminating critical points of friction in the customer journeys and – most importantly – find places where they can really amplify the ‘wow’. Then they can build more realistic goals around what it takes to win, keep and grow their various priority customer segments.”

Steve Dennis, [Forbes Contributor](#) and Author of *Remarkable Retail: How to Win and Keep Customers in the Age of Digital Disruption*

ACTION STEP

Make a list of your top 3 goals for your retail business within the next 3 months, 6 months and then one year. With 9 goals total, work towards meeting them with proactive efforts fueled by marketplace analysis, inventory management, customer care and of course, data. To help stay on track of these goals, make them visible to you on a daily basis so that you are more likely to stay focused on achieving them.

ACTION STEP 9

Repurpose your brick & mortar footprint

If your store equipped to adjust to the necessary requirements due to COVID-19?

Very simply, physical store environments have *demand* change in response to the coronavirus. From social distancing signage to curbside pick-up to updated merchandising features and more, there are a variety of responsibilities and actions that customers need to be alerted to. Despite these updates, however, it's important the core essentials of retail are not dismissed along the way.

Retail expert Georganne Bender believes that in order for brick and mortar merchants to truly excel post COVID-19, they "should not lose focus on merchandising." Expanding on this, Bender explains that with new priorities and expectations due to COVID-19, it's easy to lose sight of traditional in-store expectations.

"Despite the new challenges and responsibilities of merchants, retailers need to set their sales floors to sell. It's easy to forgo these basic store requirements when you are busy sanitizing the cash wrap 400 times a day, but merchandising isn't something you can let slide. More so than ever, shoppers who visit your store are ready to buy and your job is to set displays that encourage them to pause."

Creating a pause effect is what will introduce more dollars to your store, but creating a safe

place for them to pause will be key. To help customers confidently return to your store, consider the following:

1. **Signage.** Offer clear exterior and interior store signage alerting customers to updated store policies, social distancing requirements, updated store hours, curbside pick-up details and all other messages you want your customers to know.
2. **Safety.** Provide PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) to your staff, as well as offer sanitizing options such as hand sanitizer and wipes for surfaces to staff and customers alike. Introduce strengthened cleaning procedures, and identify social distancing and protective face covering guidelines as needed.
3. **Curbside Delivery.** This is among the more immediate changes consumers were introduced to during COVID-19 and while it may have felt temporary at the time, it's here to stay. Implement a strong strategy to support this offering, including space outside your storefront to easily welcome customers for pick-up and a well trained staff on hand to deliver purchases as safely as possible.
4. **Touchless Payless.** As highlighted in action step 9, providing alternative payment options to traditional credit cards or cash is a must. Consumers have a variety of ways in which they can – and want – to pay in 2020, and retailers need to adapt to this as a way to eliminate the risk of losing sales. As an added bonus, many of these payments are touchless, enhancing the safety and confidence of the customer shopper experience.

“There will be a wave of changes as brick and mortar stores open again. Short term will be limited occupancy and less of a push to have in-store events but longer term we are looking at consumers increasingly adopting technologies that will push brands and retailers towards in-store digitalization from self-guided exploration to contactless check-out. Brands will need to create environments that more seamlessly transition from fulfillment to experience, and they will need to deliver on quick-serve metrics as much as they do on customer service. Display windows will evolve in their purpose, requiring the ability to transform from a point of visual display and storytelling to one centered around a purchase and/or pick-up.”

Melissa Gonzalez, CEO of The Lionesque Group and Principal at MG2

ACTION STEP

No time or no clue on what to say in your updated store signage? The National Retail Federation offers free, downloadable signs that you can use in your unique store alerting customers to store best practices amidst and post COVID-19. Signage includes messaging to support social distancing requirements, face covering details, communication strategies and more.

[Explore their options here.](#)

ACTION STEP 10

Reward yourself on a job well done!

The roadmap to recovering retail is not black or white. There are twists and turns, unexpected road-bumps, financial set-backs and even accidents – so to speak – that may be experienced along the way. It will, undoubtedly, be among the more complicated journeys you will ever experience *simply* because the final destination is yet to be determined. After all, many questions remain unknown.

- Will there be a vaccine for COVID-19?
- Will employees follow through on your updated store expectations?
- Will the economy shift gears *again* unexpectedly?
- Will customers want to shop more leisurely or only for essentials?
- Will retail ever look like it used to prior to COVID-19?

“skulQ wants to help build our economy back. As we all know, retail is going to be forced to reinvent itself more than ever and we are here to help. We have always believed physical retail should be more than just in-store transactions. Now more than ever, we want to help retailers across American reopen and we have the technical solutions to support.”

Kevin McKenzie, CEO of skulQ

ACTION STEP

Despite the many questions that are unknown, proactively shifting gears and adjusting lanes in order to better accommodate your customers, your local marketplace and your inventory demands will help lead you to your new retail destinations. These new milestones may not come easy, but they will be rewarded if you stay on your path towards navigating retail despite the challenges of COVID-19... and that's something to celebrate!

CONCLUSION

Since the onset of COVID-19, traditional and digitally native brands alike have had to adapt seemingly overnight to meet consumers' needs and demands. Yet whether large or small, new or veteran, *no* retailer has been immune to the change COVID-19 has commanded. What has not changed, however, is the fact that retail competition still exists despite many retailers, including Pier 1, Payless Shoes, Dress Barn and Tuesday Morning, announcing they are [permanently closing their doors](#).

As you move ahead into 2020 and beyond, remember every turn, every shift, every bump and every brake are what should be expected to continue your journey towards successfully rebuilding your retail business. Along the way, don't lose sight of each of action step necessary as a way to help guide you towards your continued and constantly evolving retail goals.

ACTION STEP #1: Review what your business was like prior to COVID-19.

ACTION STEP #2: Reconsider what your business now needs to be.

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ACTION STEP #10: Reward yourself on a job well done!

Finally, every retail journey is only possible due to the fuel that keeps retailers going... which are customers.

Customers have many choices as to where they shop, who they remain loyal to and why they choose one retailer versus another. Retailers that will capture their dollars will be those that best respond to their updated preferences in shopping due to COVID-19, and this will begin with inventory assortment but extend to every detail of the shopping experience. As you move ahead in your retail journey, make sure customers are in your passenger seats at all times. Without them, after all, you will have nowhere to go.