



**DOWNTOWN**  
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# BUILDING CUSTOMER TRUST KIT

No one wanted or was fully prepared for this health crisis or the disruption it has caused. It has changed things in both our personal and our working lives. However, therein lies the opportunity to hit the 'Pause' button, reflect on our work and business, and how we operate. What lessons have we learned and how can we apply that to our daily professional lives?

The reality is, that once your businesses and economy open, customers will still have concerns about protecting themselves and trusting that your space is safe. They may not feel comfortable with entering your restaurant or coffee shop, interacting and touching the merchandise, or touching the credit card machines. Your success and viability depends on understanding how your customers' needs and concerns have changed following this pandemic.

In an effort to help you meet these needs and manage customer concerns, we've compiled this 'Trust Kit'. This kit is designed to help you better prepare to welcome back your customers in a safe and comfortable way, as you work to rebuild the trust of your customers and nurture that trust long into the future.

# BUILDING CUSTOMER TRUST KIT

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# General Business Online Sales:



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Are your products or gift cards able to be purchased online as well as in-store? As this latest crisis that caused shut-downs across the U.S. taught us, having the ability to still bring in revenue when your business's doors are closed, will allow your customers to show support, while also ensuring you and your business can still serve the needs of your clients.

- **Social media live videos highlighting products:** Don't have an online store and not sure how to start your e-commerce sales? Try highlighting different products that you offer in-store via social media pictures and videos.
- **Online web store that you can customize and set-up yourself:** Some examples of low-cost website e-commerce software solutions that you can set-up yourself include Locable, Square, Weebly, Wix and others. Check-in with our downtown Small Business Development Center to discuss other e-commerce options.
- **Tie-in online options to your existing website:** Contact your web developer to see how having an online shopping & inventory option can be added to your company website as soon as possible.
- **Hours and days of business:** If your business hours are not up to date on your website, this is an immediate fix that should be implemented ASAP, as it will have a huge impact on your business. Another simple fix for temporary closures includes referring customers to your Facebook page where you have your current hours of operation listed.
- **Online phone ordering systems:** Is your business set-up to for customers to be able to use their phones to place their orders for your products? As demand for online ordering grows during, as well as following COVID-19, try to find solutions that allow customers to order your menu/retail items, pay for their order, and then have their order delivered or available for pick-up all online or via an app. using one system. This will not only help you compete with the larger businesses, but it is a system you can implement now in preparation of your re-opening.

# Food/Beverage Business Changes:



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While your food or beverage business may be able to re-open, not everyone is going to be comfortable coming in, sitting down amongst groups of people to eat, or enjoy their coffee, hold a meeting, etc. Here are some things you can do to help customers feel more comfortable and safe:

- **Continue curbside pick-up and delivery:** Can you continue to offer curbside pick-up for food orders placed online or via phone? If your business can't sustain staff for delivery, consider partnering with DoorDash, Grub Hub, or other services.
- **Move tables further apart:** The reality is that consumers are going to be weary of packed spaces, and will want a little space! Social distancing practices and the gradual re-opening measures will likely translate, at least temporarily and possibly longer-term, to a 30% to 50% reduction in your occupancy limits. Space out those tables and open-up the flow so customers can still practice social distancing.
- **Continue visual safety measures:** From wearing gloves for delivery/curbside pick-ups, placing extra hand sanitizer at exits/entries, and constantly wiping off payments mechanisms or used pens – show your customers that safety and health continues to be a priority for your business. We guarantee your customers will tell others and that they'll keep visiting your business over those that aren't taking these extra steps to keep items clean.
- **Hands-free payment:** Consider implementing contactless payment options. Contactless – also known as “tap” payments, allow customers to put a smartphone or credit/debit card with the technology near a contactless-enabled device, instead of swiping or inserting a card into the PIN pad. Popular forms of contactless payments include Apple Pay, Google Pay and Samsung Pay. This will help customers reduce contact with commonly used surfaces like PIN pads. If you still offer credit card readers etc. that require a PIN, make sure to wipe these surfaces down after every use.



- **Add sidewalk/parklet seating:** Outdoor seating can help offset and decrease indoor seating capacity; and small-group (2 to 4 persons) outdoor seating could also be a great option for customers who are waiting to pick-up grab and go menu items.
- **Disposable menus:** Try disposable recyclable menus, or consider the increased use of menu boards (static and digital) and menu apps.
- **Packaged (plastic sealed) utensils and sanitary hand wipes:** While not the most eco-friendly, for a couple months, offering these types of packaged utensils can help cut-down on germs and make your customers feel more at ease.
- **Grab and go growlers:** We saw this the grab & grow growler idea implemented by local breweries and distilleries during COVID-19 closures. Customers who love your specialty brewed products can pull up to the curb or your backdoor to pick-up a growler/gallon of their favorite cocktail and brews after they submit their order and payment online or over the phone. You might want to consider delivery if this is an option with your MLCC license and if orders are located within a short delivery radius.
- **Reservation system:** If your restaurant offers reservations, you may rely on this system more now than ever to limit occupancy and crowds in your establishment.
- **Limit number of people in waiting areas:** To cut down on groups of patrons huddled together waiting for a table, close your waiting area and ask customers to wait outside on your patio or in their vehicles.

*\*For more guidance visit the National Restaurant Association at [www.restaurant.org](http://www.restaurant.org)*

# Retail Business Changes:



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- **VIP/Special invite/RSVP limited attendance soft openings:** Special events like these can help you welcome back customers, experiment with changes and collect customer feedback/suggestions.
- **Offer 'by-appointment' only shopping:** Utilizing 'by appointment' shopping can help you control how many people are in your store at one time to help customers feel more comfortable.
- **Virtual shopping:** Consider offering virtual shopping experiences via social media channels and event pages.
- **Have one staff member serve as a "personal shopper":** Having one individual dedicated to walking around with a customer (from a safe distance of course) not only adds a special touch and "VIP feeling" for your customers, but also allows staff to know what items were touched so they can clean items after the customer leaves.
- **Give them a feeling:** To make shoppers feel cared for and comfortable, you're going to have to give them something that they can't find online – a feeling! You will have to care for those in-store shoppers and provide a feeling of 'going above and beyond'. Some ideas include opening the door, taking items to the car, or talking out what you have in common to build a relationship, develop trust and help separate customers from thoughts of COVID doom and gloom that they may have felt outside the store. All of this adds to giving your customers a feeling of HOPE.
- **Hand cleaner at entry:** Ask customers to immediately sanitize their hands when entering the store.
- **Utilize open floor plans:** Use showroom and other merchandising techniques to create a more open floor space.
- **Masks:** You can offer free take-home masks for anyone that comes into your store.

\*For more guidance visit [www.retailers.com](http://www.retailers.com)

# Service Industry Business Changes:



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- **Spacing:** It may sound over-simplified or simple, but following this health crisis, everyone is going to want, and need more space to feel comfortable. Whether its your salon chairs, yoga mats, or nail tech tables – consider spacing customers and employees further apart.
- **Virtual classes:** How can you move your class or work-out, etc. to an online virtual set-up? Both Firefly Hot Yoga, and the YMCA Downtown Wellness Center implemented recorded and LIVE classes for their users so that they could continue collecting revenue from classes and memberships. Check-out their platforms for inspiration
- **Virtual chats and meetings:** This applies to all businesses. We've had to become more comfortable with Zoom, Skype, and Google Hang-outs. These platforms will have a long-term effect on how we, and others are expected to do business. Take time now to consider what meetings, work, and other interactions can be held in a remote or virtual space!
- **Continuation of work-at-home trends/Staggered shifts:** How many employees can work from home even one day/week? Or can you stagger hours/shifts to continue to promote social distancing
- **Increased use of appointments and after-hours appointments:** Utilizing 'by appointment' hours can help you control how many people are in your business at one time to help customers feel more comfortable. Let your clients know that they cannot bring extra co-workers or family members with them to appointments, to cut down on the number of occupants in your space.

# Arts/Cultural and Attraction Changes:



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- **Go virtual:** Whether you have a gallery or are an individual artist, think about ways that you can drive traffic to your page, receive donations, highlight artist work, and more. Creative partnerships with businesses or other groups is also always helpful! Offer these virtual tours of your gallery, online concerts and more for a small fee using online platforms such as Paypal, Brown Paper Ticket, or Venmo. This will allow the public to support your organization while also supporting local artists and limiting crowds
- **Online classes:** Online classes still offer a hands-on experience, along with activities that members can enjoy from the comfort of their homes. This will help you continue to provide value as well as a reason for the public to continue their membership.
- **Outdoor activities:** Consider small group 'make & take' activities that can be held in outdoor community spaces or vacant corners that will allow people to still feel a sense of community while enjoying beautiful Michigan weather days!
- **Outdoor performances:** Open outdoor spaces allow attendees to spread out as they enjoy the show from a safe distance.
- **Creative re-grand opening/VIP events:** The fact that your venue can now re-open is cause for celebration! Highlight local talent, get creative, and with RSVPs you can control both crowds and social distancing requirements.

# General Protective Health Measures:



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Having additional health and safety measures in place for your employees and customers will play a huge role in making your consumers feel comfortable when visiting your business. Some additional ideas not already covered include:

- **Masks and gloves for all workers:** Your fellow downtown business owner, Kositchek's has even offered to have their tailors shift efforts to help make these. So not only will you be helping your workers feel safe, but you'll be supporting a fellow downtown business.
- **Infrared thermometers:** Some businesses may begin to check temperatures at the door before employees enter
- **Mark spaces on the floor:** This will help customers see that your business is still practicing social distancing to keep fellow customers as well as staff safe and healthy. Plus, the reality is, our government may still require a certain amount of social distancing in order for businesses to safely re-open. This can be done creatively or as simply as an 'X' marks the spot
- **Installation of plexiglass shields at all cash registers:** There are local Michigan businesses who can help make these in limited or bulk quantities if you need including: TinkrLab, R Gari Signs in Pickney, SpartanNash in Grand Rapids, Magnum Tools in Romulu
- **Wipe down products before handing to the customer:** Whether its books, trays, boxed specialty gifts, cups, etc.... think about wiping products down (while wearing gloves) before you hand the product over to your customer.
- **Controlled Employee Shifts:** By having controlled shifts you can ensure you aren't mixing different workers on different shifts. That way, if one person on the shift gets exposed, it doesn't potentially require that you shut down your entire business.
- **Additional health and safety resources:** Local businesses include: Duckett Brothers Distributing, Image Builders Unlimited, Rita Lameroux (hand made masks), and Jungle Jane Promotions



## Cash-Mobs and Other Creative Ideas:

- **Virtual social hours:** You can still drive sales and customers to your business by offering virtual social hours that feature discounts or specials while teaching them about your product.
- **Online camps/classes/event:** Its all about the virtual experience for activities that typically consist of larger gatherings. Start planning now for how you can turn your summer events, camps, cooking classes, fundraisers and more into more of a virtual experience that still provides a sense of community, excitement, and offer hands-on activities (just in a different environment).
- **Cash mobs:** A cash mob brings a group of people together to support local business by making purchases. The purpose of these mobs is to support both the local businesses and the overall community. But what if you turned this idea virtual by releasing each week, a different code or location that could ensure people are spending at least \$10 or more at a different business each week. This can even be started while businesses are still closed

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