



The Future of the Retail and Restaurant Industries



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The coronavirus, and the social distancing brought on by it, have changed the future of the retail and restaurant industries. It has forced retailers and restaurateurs to evolve and re-evaluate their business options very, very quickly, pushing them toward contactless delivery, curbside pickup, meal kits, and other alternatives. On the other side of this pandemic, it's hard to deny that these industries will look different than they did before quarantine.

The challenge has become clear: how can your retail business or restaurant begin to prepare for a post-COVID-19 world?

Emphasis on Mobility

Mobility is especially important for retailers and restaurants during this time, both physically and in terms of payment, as the world emerges post-pandemic. The ability of customers to place orders ahead of time and then pick them up from the restaurant's parking lot, while adhering to social distancing guidelines and safety, adds the bonus the convenience.

In fact, it may become even more important as many customers may find it hard to live without these new options. Some brick-and-mortar stores are closed to in-store customers, favoring curbside pickup and delivery exclusively—this is even true of large chain stores with high numbers of locations. Moreover, this increased convenience could mean increased revenues and new opportunities.

One such opportunity comes in the form of prioritizing mobile options, such as online ordering and mobile POS. This technology, while gaining popularity pre-pandemic due to the convenience it provided customers, is now a must-have for any restaurant due to customer demand.



While today's mobile payment options are necessary to slow the spread of the virus, they offer poignant non-COVID benefits that are hard to argue against. These include increasing revenue through convenient and easy ordering options, improving order accuracy while reducing wait times, improving visibility and marketing, collecting business-growing customer data, and effectively responding to customer demand.

Increasing convenience is an important facet here. A sure way to do this is to offer as many different forms of payment as possible. This goes beyond simply accepting cash, credit, and debit—today's retail and restaurant climate show that even these options don't quite cut it when it comes to ease of ordering and payment. Online options, like online ordering, mobile ordering, and paying with mobile devices, along with curbside and tableside payment, are becoming much more popular and making it easier to order in both retail and restaurant settings.



Changing Customer Behavior

Across the globe, consumer behavior is shifting to keep up with changing trends. Takeout and delivery options are more prevalent, and trends indicate that consumers are willing to maintain these habits after the pandemic.

More and more customers are placing orders online via websites and mobile apps.. While today these are linked to safety factors, they have implications that may last past the end of the pandemic. Consumers are dining on-premises far less frequently, though in many parts of the world spending on groceries, takeout, and delivery orders is increasing.

While in-store options will soon become possible again once social distancing guidelines have been lifted, the pandemic has opened customers up to this new form of convenience. In a fast-paced world where consumers are busier than ever, convenience will be key to providing a phenomenal customer experience.



Many customers simply do not have time for in-store shopping or in-house dining, and prefer to expedite and simplify the experience as much as possible. Restaurants are forced to shift from dine-in options to emphasizing carry-out, and delivery, and these changes may prove to stick with us.

This is even true of restaurants that offer alcoholic beverages to-go; while this has been seen before, it's something that's becoming part of the new norm. This is especially true as consumer demand continues to evolve. From liquor stores, to bakeries, to home improvement stores, the growing demand for fast, convenient, and safe customer experiences will outlast the pandemic. It will be up to each business to implement procedures that accommodate this need.

Reliance on New Technology

Technology will be the driving force behind these changes, and its rapid adoption will be what makes these shifts possible for both restaurants and retail businesses. Innovation is swift when it comes to meeting new demands that arise, and businesses that seek out innovative solutions will be at the forefront once the world eases into a new normal.

Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, both industries must find new and creative ways to continue serving customers during these times of uncertainty. If this pandemic has taught the industry anything, it is that businesses must prioritize agility, flexibility, and adaptability in order to survive unforeseen challenges and obstacles that arise.

The businesses that have invested in flexible and scalable technology have opened themselves up to new possibilities and can find success. Those that prefer sticking to inflexible technology will see themselves stagnate, finding it more difficult to adapt to new circumstances as they arise. Businesses can rely on new and exciting technology to engage customers while also keeping operations safe during times of social distancing.

This pandemic has also spurred on further development in the way of technology in areas like mobile order pick-up for restaurants. Mobile technology and mobile POS systems are at the forefront of these developments; however an even greater emphasis has been placed on contactless methods when it comes to placing orders and taking payment. Mobile ordering platforms have paved the way for contactless delivery and checkout, which are instrumental in keeping customers safe and satisfied while still offering easy and convenient experiences.

It's no doubt that retail and restaurant experiences and technology will continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus is forcing business to evolve and adapt their strategies to survive and thrive, changing the current business climate. Many businesses are changing to curbside and delivery options; even liquor stores and grocery stores are adapting to meet a changing consumer demand. All of this enforces that there is a need for new payment technology that allows the ones who adapt to avoid stagnation.

NCC's expertise and commitment to success in the retail and restaurant sectors can help businesses make these necessary changes, helping operators to find the right solutions to fit the changing industry and consumer needs in a post-pandemic environment.



Actionable Things Restaurants Can Do Right Now:

In addition to getting online ordering in place, there are some other things that restaurants can do to keep business flowing.

- ✓ **Use social media to keep your customers informed about your specials, hours, and menu updates.**
- ✓ **Leverage hashtags to increase your content's searchability, reaching more customers and broadening your audience.**
- ✓ **Get curbside to-go technology and processes in place.** Rugged mobile POS tablets are crucial for curbside operations. Take orders and payments carside.
- ✓ **Offer family meals to create a cost-effective option for families or other groups of people who are quarantined together.**

Other things to consider for online ordering and curbside processes:

- ✓ **Accept orders using all lines of communication, including phone and email orders, as well as order placed over Facebook and Instagram direct messages.**
- ✓ **Make sure you are collecting pertinent customer information, i.e. name for the order and car make, model and color.**
- ✓ **Keep your takeout station well stocked with items such as, to-go utensils, napkins, bags, condiments, etc.**
- ✓ **Double check every single order to make sure the order is correct.**
- ✓ **Consider running a limited or weekly menu to minimize waste and maximize profit.**

About NCC

Since 1986, NCC has been delivering comprehensive software solutions to businesses in the hospitality and retail industries. Our software engineers combine years of experience in software development with a strong understanding of restaurant and retail operations to create products designed to work in a wide variety of environments.

Through a world-wide network of reseller partners, NCC has installed over 50,000 POS systems in more than 35 countries. NCC products are installed in wide range of retail and hospitality concepts including Table Service, Quick Service, Fast Casual, Bars, Night Clubs, Delis, Frozen Yogurt, Delivery and Concessions.