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A Checklist of Ideas for Retail

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Editor's Note: Clay Johnson is a Ball Seed Co. sales representative for Eastern Michigan who spent many years working at an independent garden center. He put together this list of ideas for retailers looking for help with curbside pickup, on-site shopping and delivery.

These are just some of my own thoughts through my experience in retail. Trying to look at this from a customer's perspective from when they enter the parking lot all the way through until they leave the parking lot.

Business sign by the road

- **Make sure your sign is clear and extra visible.**
- **Make sure to clearly convey that you are open for business.**
- **If applicable let customers know what your business is doing to keep them safe.**
 - Use your sign/s to direct customers to your website and social media sites.
 - Display a customer question hotline and put a knowledgeable employee on the phone lines.
- **Draw more attention to your sign.** *(make sure to check with your city or township).*
 - Consider planting flowers, gardens, etc. around your sign.
 - Can you display a few large containers of plant material, hanging baskets, garden art?
 - Can you light your sign up at night?

Parking lots

- **Designate curb side order pick-up and loading areas.**
 - Come up with a plan on how to manage pick up orders.
 - *Make parking signs labeled as "Pick Up Only" and number each sign.*
 - *Have a phone number on each sign that a customer can call to let you know they are here to pick up and at which sign number.*
 - *Manage time slots for this service.*
 - *Consider extending early and late hours for this service only.*
 - Could you have an "on the spot" pick up area?
 - *Customers drive in and hand, email, or text, an employee a list.*

- *Pre-plan a list that can be downloaded and printed out ahead of time, so a customer can fill it out and be ready when they pull in.*
- Can employees pull these types of pick-up orders from a back-stock area so they can avoid retail spaces?
- Make sure these areas are spaced out to protect customer and employees.
- Make a safe protocol plan to protect any employees who may be loading customer vehicles.
- **Consider a cart collection plan.**
 - Can you dedicate an employee/s to this task?
 - Will they be disinfecting carts as they go?
 - Where will these carts end up and how will you convey to customers that they have been disinfected?
- **Provide plenty of garbage cans for customers to throw away wipes and used gloves.**
- **Consider trying to corral customers walking to and from your parking lots in separate lanes. One way in and one way out.**
- **Make sure that customers know their options if they drive in and get turned off by the amount of traffic.**
 - Have a sign that lists days and hours that tend to be less crowded.
- **Set up a separate outdoor retail in your parking lot. Perhaps a drive-thru grab-and-go, or point-and-load and pay on the spot.**

Shopping Carts

- **Consider having customer and employee sanitation stations.**
 - Disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, hand washing areas, etc.
 - Clean cart areas vs. used cart areas.
- **Cart collection plan cont.**
 - Can you dedicate an employee/s to this task?
 - Will they be disinfecting carts as they go?
 - Where will these carts end up and how will you convey to customers that they have been disinfected?

Front Entrances

- **Consider having an A-Frame sign or some directive about how your business is practicing social distancing.**
- **Consider directional signage or a greeter (set at a safe distance).**
 - Directing customers to the product they are looking for to help traffic flow.
 - Managing the number of customers in one area.
- **Consider having high impulse, grab-and-go items that are easily accessible in several areas. Customers may not want to spend a lot of time around other shoppers searching for these items.**
 - Utilize outdoor space weather permitting.

- **Consider having “runner” employees who can safely track items down for customers and bring them to their carts or to a check out area.**

Retail Areas

- **Can you turn a stock area into a second retail shopping area to spread out customers?**
 - Can you add or move check out registers to these areas?
- **Can you utilize outside areas for an “open air” shopping atmosphere?**
 - Can you add or move check out registers to these areas?
- **If you are low on space can you use parts of your parking areas to increase your retail space and spread out shoppers?**
 - Can you add or move check out registers to these areas?
- **If you have a larger piece of property can you rent large tents and set up a second retail area?**
 - Can you add or move check out registers to these areas?
- **Consider loading up plant racks and moving them to different locations on your property and setting up separate retail sites and check outs.**
- **Drive thru shopping?**
 - Point and pay.
 - Displaying popular items that are easy to shop, easy to load, easy to keep the line moving.

Retail Aisleways

- **Consider traffic flow down each isle.**
 - Can one-way traffic work to help distance customers?
 - *Can you use tape or arrows on the floor or benches, or free-standing signage to direct traffic flow?*
 - Can you use signage in front of each aisle “No more than 10 customers at a time, Please”?
 - If you have an in-store speaker system can you use this to relay information or manage traffic flow?
- **Consider having high margin items and best-selling items placed in several locations that are easily accessible without having to roam the entire store.**
- **Bring high impulse items to the fronts of benches and to easily accessible levels on shelves.**
- **Cut down on intricate displays and endcaps and use these valuable spaces to make simple displays to move high impulse products.**
- **Open and widen your aisleways if possible.**
 - Create more open spaces. Take out a few benches. Make passing lanes. Create areas for customer to get out of the way of each other.

Bathrooms

- **Come up with a plan to manage the disinfecting of customer and employee bathrooms.**
 - Let customers and employee know what you are doing to keep them safe.
 - Can portable bathrooms be an option for expanded retail areas?

Retail Displays

- **Consider displaying high impulse, high margin, and best-selling items in many different locations in your retail areas so they are easily accessible.**
- **Utilize outside area to put these items in front of customers' faces.**
 - Use large wagons, tents, umbrellas, plant carts, and extra benching to set up outdoor displays.
- **Take hanging baskets down from your drip lines. Make them accessible. Customers may not want to ask for help or wait for an employee to take one down for them.**
 - Make barrels of safe disinfectants to keep the handles of hanging basket helper hooks and poles in.

Cash Registers and checkout lines

- **Make sure customers have options if they get turned off by standing in line or by the amount of customer traffic.**
 - If a customer gets nervous, work out a way to ring up their order while they wait in their vehicle. Take care of payment over the phone and bring their products out to them.
 - Give customers some options to return during early morning or late afternoon hours when it is less crowded.
 - If it is a "special customer" or large account can you open a half hour early to take care of them or stay open a half hour later?
- **Make sure it is very clear to customer what you are doing to keep them safe and your employee safe.**
 - Display lists of highly visible protocol measures that you have put into place.
 - Make sure your employees on the front lines know who to contact if customers have questions or concerns.
 - Have an emergency plan in place if a customer looks sick or is questioning the health of another customer or employee.
 - Does there have to be direct contact of any kind?
 - Are your cashiers disinfecting counter tops and credit card processors?
 - Where should the customer stand while cashiers are processing and scanning orders?
- **Consider spreading out registers and checkout lines.**
 - Figure out what supplies you may need to make this happen?
 - *Tents, umbrellas, extension cords, extra counter tops, etc.*
 - Use tape or markers in your checkout isles to indicate 6-ft. spacing.
 - Utilize outdoor space.
 - *Nursery yard space, parking lot space, stock area spaces, etc.*
- **Could you have a register/s outside dedicated to only soil, fertilizer, mulch and nursery sales so customers don't have to go into your store? What other product lines could you do this with?**
- **Always give customers a reason to return.**
 - Highlight and celebrate the physical, spiritual, and emotional, attributes of being outdoors and

gardening during these stressful times.

- Post extended hours to help spread out foot traffic.
- Stay current, keep your customers informed.