

# 3 ways to reinvent retail customer engagement in a post-Covid world

By  Robbie Kearns

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As the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift to shopping online, retailers have had to re-imagine how they do business in a new digital world. Over recent months, leveraging technology to stabilise business has shown us what it meant to be resilient in a crisis. It is clear that how and where we shop - along with customer expectations - are changing forever.



Credit: Getty

Even as stores have reopened, the demand for digital service continues to surge. According to Salesforce's [Q1 Global Shopping Index](#), global digital commerce has grown in the last year at a rate of 58%. This growth indicates that the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have accelerated the global growth of the digital commerce industry. The rise includes considerable increases in shopper spend (31%) as well as digital traffic (27%).

In a post-pandemic world, the relationships that retailers have with their customers and technology alike will continue to evolve. A strong e-commerce strategy means creating inspiring shopping journeys online, being available to customers 24/7, quickening the pace of business and minimising unnecessary costs. Retailers equipped with a single view of each customer also presents an opportunity to reimagine brick-and-mortar stores.



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As the digital-first economy continues to evolve at hyperspeed, here are three ways in which retailers can begin to build a unified customer engagement strategy and boost brand loyalty.

## 1. Create inspiring shopping experiences online

When shopping online customers want to be inspired. The more information available, and the less clicks required to access this content, the better. Social platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest and TikTok exemplify the growing power of technology to drive sales. Rather than providing long lists of products and prices, searchable via filters, by leveraging

popular social media and streaming platforms retailers can digitally create the in-store sense of discoverability.

A seamless experience across all channels is essential to attracting and securing business. Whether customers are browsing on their desktop or mobile device, collecting data at every touchpoint will help retailers get to know their customers better and provide personalised experiences they expect in-store.

Being able to share the right information and offers at the right time, based on previous interactions and tailored to customers' needs, will keep them coming back for more.



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## 2. Communicate directly with customers at anytime, from anywhere

As online sales continue to increase, the cost of e-commerce – picking, packing, delivery, and returning items – should not be underestimated. Even whilst data continues to inform messaging and marketing strategies, online customers need just as much, if not more, personal consultation than they would receive in-store.

Having the capability to communicate with customers directly, wherever they are, is revolutionising the customer experience and saving retailers time and costs associated with handling requests to return items.

In this context, both the strategic deployment of AI-powered chatbots and the continuous development of store associates is becoming increasingly important. Through communication tools like live chat and digital concierge services retailers can quickly address consumer queries, for instance, relating to product availability, shipping visibility and delivery updates.

Continually revamping commerce webpages to provide comprehensive product descriptions and reviews, accurate fit guides, even videos, are key to instilling confidence in customers before they buy.

## 3. Transform customer service in store

Just as the evolution of e-commerce is making online shopping more convenient, retailers can also deliver a safer, smarter and more unified customer experience in store. Leveraging new channels like live streaming is helping retailers to drive customer engagement, showcase and sell products.

Connecting physical and digital retail channels and creating a single source of truth for every customer is better equipping in-store associates to deliver a complete, personalised, and trusted service.

With an omnichannel strategy and ready insights, such as past customer purchases and access to digital inventory, retailers can promote, sell and ship products from anywhere in store, in real time. Altogether, this is making the store associates' and customers' experience more informed and convenient.



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## The need to invest, on- and offline

Having an effective e-commerce strategy will be essential to meet changing shopping trends online and minimising requests to return items. Looking beyond this pandemic, continued investment in engaging and responsive customer service, both online and in-store, will be a key component of every retailer's digital transformation journey.

Appearing online is one thing, digitising whole business models is another. In an all-digital world, only by connecting marketing, commerce, and service teams together can companies confidently deliver informed, inspired, and personalised customer experiences.

## ABOUT ROBBIE KEARNS

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