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## Retailing in a Post-COVID World

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There *is* a light at the end of the COVID tunnel, and it's sunlight (not a train)!

So what will be different after the pandemic finally recedes, and what will remain the same? Here is a checklist of items to consider when welcoming back customers to your store.

### Cleanliness: *Continued Expectations*

Habits have formed deep patterns in our psyche after a year of being told to social distance, wear masks, wash our hands, and frequently sanitize any surface that has been touched by the public. These habits are not going away anytime soon, so be prepared to continue having masks and sanitizer on hand, and show that you are still hypercleaning your store on a regular basis. If you haven't branded that sanitizer dispenser or your acrylic shields, now is the time to do so, as you'll want them to look like they are cohesive parts of your interior and not just temporary additions.

### Customer Service: *Keep it Going*

Be prepared to hear, "Well, you brought it out to my car all last year, can't you still do that for me?" Again, we have conditioned customers to expect some extraordinary services and that will not fade soon. Some people will just want that extra service, so give it to them!

### Freedom: *Party Time!*

Many customers have been waiting patiently for the flood gates to open and are going to be pretty excited about being able to leave their homes and freely go about their day, including shopping and dining out, without feeling like they are in danger or breaking the law. They will want things to be fabulous for their "coming out" party, so turn up the "wow" and the customer experience in your store. Give them a big "Welcome Back!" greeting and inspire them throughout their shopping journey. Give them ideas via grand displays; show them "how to" with demos; bring in a string quartet or jazz trio on the weekends to entertain; and serve treats throughout the day. The first year back post-COVID is going to be one long, fun party with high expectations, so put on the Ritz!

### Website & Social Media: *First Impressions*

We've also been conditioned to do everything online first, so even though consumers are back out shopping in stores, it doesn't mean they aren't going to your Facebook page or website ahead of their visit. Be sure to keep your site and social media platforms up to date, and post in-store events so they are immediately visible. Encourage customers to come to the store to see what you've done with the place, and to interact with new merchandise. Remember, more often than not, your digital face is the first impression you will make.

### Inventory: *Careful Curation*

It's hard to know exactly when the rush of patrons will hit the streets again, so plan with flexibility in mind. Work with your vendors on accessibility and delivery dates. Be sure to have on-trend merchandise available and up front, as customers are going to want to see and touch the latest and greatest. In the absence of vacations and dining out, those who have remained employed through the pandemic have spending money, which they've been saving for when life returns to some sense of normal. Make sure you have what they are looking for on the sales floor.

To sum it all up, move forward with a plan that is smart, sanitary, flexible and inspiring!



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**SOFFA, So Good:** The omnibus spending legislation just signed into law by President Trump includes a long-sought common federal flammability standard for upholstered furniture (the Safer Occupancy Furniture Flammability Act, or SOFFA). [FurnitureToday](#)

**It Was a Very Good Year (for LG):** LG Electronics stands to reap record sales and profits from its home appliance business in 2020, thanks to strong pandemic-period demand for its fully-featured premium products. [The Korea Herald](#)