

Restarting under the new normal:

recommendations for UK motor traders based on government and industry expert guidance

After weeks of lockdown and with 40% of global consumers delaying major purchases until the outbreak begins to decrease or is over in their countryⁱ, following just the right guidance during the first few months of reopening is critical to business success.

To help you get back up and running at full steam, here we make recommendations, based on verifiable research from a range of high profile government and retail sources*, on how to start back up under “the new normal”.

Firstly: show your customers and staff you care about their safety

keep everyone updated on actions being taken to reduce risks of exposure to coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace

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Before they arrive on-site

Put your customers’ and team members’ minds at rest from the very first interaction by clearly showing what you’re doing at your sites to protect them.

Recommendation 1: share photos of your measures for a quick and lasting impression of professionalism

Post your safety measures on your website homepage, plus on your social media feeds in amongst promotions where possible. More and more, consumers research businesses and products online before purchasingⁱⁱ. Consumers respond very positively to communications about how you’re managing coronavirusⁱⁱⁱ and also to offers and loyalty perks^{iv}, so blending the two should be a winning combination.

When they arrive on-site

Under lockdown, the government required you to “manage entry into your store”^v - but warier consumers also want this post-lockdown. To enact this, and support the 52% of customers who want to see how brands are helping consumers during coronavirus^{vi} and who mostly believe the virus would last more than 3 months^{vii}, we recommend:

Recommendation 2: make the experience fresh

Fresh takes on two meanings here: **clean** and **new**.

Make one of your customer’s first trips out to a store a **new** and positive experience^{viii}. Run promotions to drive positive associations with being in-storeⁱ and share them online in advance of any key days. A top tip is to tie in content with local events e.g. it was recently Yorkshire Day.

We're all spending more time online at the moment: give your customers more reason to include your business in their plans now lockdown is lifted. But be careful not to run "normal" advertising campaigns – they have much lower customer approvalⁱ.

"After being in isolation for weeks and months, consumers want to make themselves feel better and start fresh – which usually means buying new stuff."

Chainstorage.com^{viii}

Clearly promoting your store's **cleanliness** remains essential^{ix}.

using a disposable cloth, first clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water. Then disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use. Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, such as bathrooms, grab-rails in corridors and stairwells and door handles

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Doing the right thing and being seen to do the right thing will reinforce your customers' loyalty^x. Keep cleaning staff in branded clothing visible and/or ask staff to disinfect surfaces and products visibly, ideally being seen by customers. Other ideas include:

- hand sanitising stations dotted around in entryways and thoroughfares
- Tags showing vehicles have been sanitised left in each vehicle. Including a tick list of exactly what you've done to sanitise the vehicle is a great touch.
- Floor stickers and posters showing social distancing in practice at your site. Make them prominent but brand them up so they don't jar with your marketing efforts.

Recommendation 3: up your online presence

With almost 50% of consumers shopping online more^{vi} and a quarter+ of shoppers trying new online retailers^{xi}, now is a great time to start capitalising on the digital and physical retail trend^{xii}.

- Could you consider a click and collect service?
- Or online demonstrations of new products? Facebook and Instagram Live are great tools for showing off new products, promotions and safety measures (see also recommendation 1).
- Or alternatively do a video of one of your team members confirming how they feel about the considerate safety measures you're taking.

During transactions

Recommendation 4: Put transparent barriers up at transaction points.

The government have recommended creating a physical barrier between you and customers at all interaction points.

If feasible, you should also put up plexiglass barriers at all points of regular interaction to further reduce the risk of infection for all parties involved, cleaning the barriers regularly.

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In support of this, and as part of our 126 year history of innovating at times of crisis, we've created a [range of Sneeze Guards](#), available in a range of sizes and printed with your branding and common social distancing messages. The guards are designed to be sturdy, quick to assemble and easy to clean. Plus 10% of profits from the guards are donated to [Food4Heroes](#), which brings us to the final recommendation...

Recommendation 5: value in your values and benevolence

Over half (54%) of UK online shoppers report they will be less likely to spend money with brands and retailers in the future that have treated their staff poorly during the coronavirus.

retailtimes.co.uk^{xiii}

As we've already mentioned, brands that have proven how they're helping people at this time are gaining future favour with 50% or more of UK consumers^{xiv}.

Show you care about more than your business, particularly if you have a community bias.

KPMG recommends taking either direct action to act on and communicate your values, by say offering discounts for healthcare workers. Indirect action can also be effective, for example donating a proportion of profits for road safety goods, or promoting staff charitable efforts. If you can point this to a prominent local charity, more's the better.

After the transaction

Where you have email addresses, send a sincere thank you from the operator and also a relevant member of the Senior Management Team. ([Mailchimp offers a great automation service to take the legwork out of this.](#)) Customers like to be appreciated and have their feedback taken on board.

A final thought

As a fellow business, we know this situation is anything but easy and sincerely hope that our guidance on reopening successfully will help alleviate some of the unique challenges.

We take pride in putting both our staff's health and customers first, we are here to guide and support you wherever we can. And finally, we wish you, your team the very best of health and prosperity.

More guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#logistics-businesses>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#retail>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#manufacturing-and-processing-businesses>

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*References

ⁱ GWI Coronavirus Research March 2020: Multi-Market Research (release 3)

ⁱⁱ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnellett/2018/02/08/new-research-shows-growing-impact-of-online-research-on-in-store-purchases/#7680c80d16a0>

ⁱⁱⁱ 79.1% of consumers 'strongly' or 'somewhat' approve of brands contacting them to advise how they're responding to coronavirus. (GWI)

^{iv} 74.9% of consumers 'strongly' or 'somewhat' approve of brands running promotions / offers / loyalty perks. (GWI)

^v <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance#retail>

^{vi} 52% of all UK consumers agree they felt greater loyalty towards brands that effectively communicate with them and are showing how they're helping people at this time (Retail Times, <https://www.retailtimes.co.uk/uk-consumer-expectations-permanently-altered-by-covid-19-pfs-survey-shows/>)

^{vii} 65% of UK consumers believe the UK outbreak will endure for 3+ months. GWI Coronavirus Research March 2020: Multi-Market Research (release 3)

^{viii} <https://chainstoreage.com/expert-insight-four-long-term-retail-trends-post-covid-19-world>

^{ix} <https://www.retaildive.com/news/the-consumer-after-covid-19/575634/> ,

<https://chainstoreage.com/expert-insight-four-long-term-retail-trends-post-covid-19-world>

^x <https://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com/research-public-policy/customer-service-topic-sheets/article/business-ethics>

^{xi} <https://www.retailtimes.co.uk/uk-consumer-expectations-permanently-altered-by-covid-19-pfs-survey-shows/>

^{xii} <https://hbr.org/2011/12/the-future-of-shopping>,

<https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/03/pleasing-customers-during-a-pandemic.html>

^{xiii} <https://www.retailtimes.co.uk/uk-consumer-expectations-permanently-altered-by-covid-19-pfs-survey-shows/>

^{xiv} <https://www.retailtimes.co.uk/uk-consumer-expectations-permanently-altered-by-covid-19-pfs-survey-shows/>