

A Small Business Strategy & Resource Guide to

WEATHERING THE WINTER

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Winter brings cold weather and unique challenges for the small businesses community.

- COVID-19 safety restrictions will likely remain in place throughout the winter season and will continue to limit normal business practices.
- Low temperatures and precipitation may mean less foot traffic and tourism, and ultimately, fewer in-person customers and sales.
- Increased competition from big box stores and large online retailers as consumers search for deals on holiday gifts and show preference for one-stop shopping.

Avoid Winter



Business Blues with

these Strategies +

Resources!



Safety First!



- Keep employees and customers safe by mandating that COVID-19 safety protocols be followed. No shirt, no shoes, no mask, NO SERVICE! Don't let your business be a source of the spread.
- Go touchless where possible. Eliminate self-service in dining establishments and introduce contactless ordering and payment options. Tip: If your business serves food, do away with gummy hard copy menus by allowing customers to scan a QR code posted to their table that leads to a digital menu. When it's time to pay, provide a QR code on their receipt that, when scanned, allows for online payment via debit or credit card.
- Install safety barriers and implement social distancing policies. Build plexiglass walls at check-out, include tamper-evident seals/stickers on products, and put down socially distanced floor decals for those waiting in line.
- Strengthen cleaning practices and increase frequency. Remember to tell your customers exactly how you've adapted your policies to keep them safe.



GO DIGITAL.

- Build your first website or make better use of your existing website by offering shoppers online buying options. Many great and inexpensive **ecommerce platforms like Shopify, Square Space, and Big Commerce** exist to help you sell, ship, and manage online purchases. Imagine being able to make sales 24/7 to customers around the globe!
- If you sell online, let existing and potential customers know by affixing a QR code for your site to your storefront and at check-out.
- Utilize social media. Demonstrate how your products and services can be enjoyed through pictures, live streams, paid sponsorships, and storytelling. Show potential customers exactly how and why they need to buy from you!

Approximately 81% of shoppers research products online before deciding to purchase! If your business is missing an online presence, you're missing sales!



GRAB & GO + DELIVERY SERVICES.

Retail and food-service businesses should consider alternate methods of product distribution like curbside pickup and delivery in winter months and beyond.

Introduce Curbside Pickup!

- Secure orders online or over the phone.
- Assign dedicated standing and parking space and create simple instructional signage for customers waiting to pay for or receive their order.
- Consider investing in a commercial food warmer to keep orders fresh and allow customers to retrieve their meals without physical interaction with staff.
- Create internal workflows to quickly and efficiently carry out this new service; i.e. train staff to watch for and process orders for curbside pickup.

Add a Delivery Option!

If you operate a food-service business, consider joining a popular delivery service platform like **GrubHub, DoorDash, and UberEats**.

These app-based services connect restaurants with freelance delivery drivers in your area. Joining is quick, easy, and fees are reasonable. A simple 'GrubHub, DoorDash, or UberEats for restaurants' search on Google will take you to their sign-up pages.



Get Outside! (Yes, Really)

Virus transmission is lowest out-of-doors, and with a few modifications, outside shopping and dining can be fun and festive!

Get Creative with Underutilized Outdoor Spaces.

- Contact your town/community leaders to obtain proper permits and waivers for transforming sidewalks, parklets, parking lots, and patios into space for outdoor seating, sidewalk sales, outdoor markets, creative performances, and food truck festivals.



Keep Warm.

- Incorporate heating sources like space heaters, heated tables, fire places, and partitions and walls that deflect cold wind.
- Encourage personal warmth. Allow customers to bring their own sources of warmth; i.e. blankets.



Embrace the Season!

Two major retail holidays, Christmas and Valentine's Day, take place in the winter. COVID or not, people will shop for gifts.

- Compete with big business, not your neighbors! From cross-promotions, coordinated neighborhood events, and strategic discounting, partnering with your neighbors can be a great method for finding new customers! Complimentary businesses are especially well-suited for strategic partnerships; think coordinated discounts for customers that do business with both a hair salon and the nail salon down the street.
- Santa sells! Make your business merry and bright by decking your halls with boughs of holly, tinsel, lights, or any classic holiday decorating staple. Hanging holiday décor at your place of business helps customers envision themselves buying gifts and services from you or dining with you.
 - Want to go the extra mile? Invite an art class from a local school division to design your holiday storefront display! Announce that a percentage of your seasonal proceeds will be donated back to the art program. Good experience for the students, and great PR for you!

DON'T GO IT ALONE!

Meet your fan club! These folks want to see your small business succeed.

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