



## JP Centre/South Main Streets Small Business Toolkit

# Holiday Shopping During COVID

### Retail Sales

We are in unprecedented times as we prepare for an uncertain holiday season. In order to preserve holiday business and revenue, business owners should anticipate that reopening remains uncertain and can roll back at any time.

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*With an advance strategy to research, innovate, and adapt, you can preserve your holiday revenue stream, and maybe even surpass expectations.*

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The holiday gift-giving season has always been vital to retail businesses. Some obstacles this year may include:

- Resurgence of COVID and another shutdown of businesses;
- Supply chain shutdowns and changes, including LACK OF PRODUCT;
- Shipping delays (either to or from you);
- Customer concerns about safety and social distancing in-store;
- And contactless shopping and/or payments.



## What is your best source of revenue and how can you preserve it?

### Product

1. Will your suppliers have product? Check with them, and then double-check. Research and consider alternative sources of products as a back-up.
2. Can your product be shipped to you? How reliable has product delivery been? Consider ordering well in advance.

## In-store Traffic

1. Have you experienced a decrease in foot traffic? This will continue into the holiday season. To provide safe in-store experiences, you can consider:
  - a. Increasing store hours; or
  - b. Booking appointments or private events for select customers.
2. Are your customers concerned about safety?
  - a. Reassure your customers. Utilize your email blasts and social media to highlight your safety measures and options for customers.
  - b. Give a video tour online to show your customers how moving around in your store will work, or how your contactless payment options work. Contact JP Centre/South Main Streets if you need assistance with contactless payment processing.
  - c. Post signage in your windows or entrances to highlight safety measures.

## Online Sales

1. Have customers asked about online sales? There are a number of ways to showcase your product online. Ask JP Centre/South Main Streets if you need help with these options.
  - a. E-commerce site (best if you have a website and cloud-based POS);
  - b. Social media - Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.
  - c. You will need to have an online payment processor - your credit card processor probably has one! Ask JPCSMS if you would like assistance.
  - d. You don't have to have a complex online presence to be successful with online sales! But you will need to maintain regular online communication to check for orders.
  - e. If you already have it, make sure your customers know, and not just online. Be sure to advertise it within your store too.

*Online sales can lead to questions about delivering or shipping product. Curbside pick-up is pretty easy, but perhaps customers want more.*

## Shipping

The more that you sell online, the easier it is to provide shipping. Shipping companies often provide services for small businesses that allow you to print your own labels and schedule pick-ups directly from your business. You can ask these companies for details about costs to help you determine your break-even point, but generally, if you ship 5 or more packages a month, you should consider a small business account. If you ship 5 or more packages a week, you should consider paying extra for the in-store pick-ups.

- <https://www.fedex.com/en-us/small-business.html>
- <https://www.ups.com/us/en/services/small-business.page>
- [https://www.dhl.com/en/express/small\\_business\\_solutions.html](https://www.dhl.com/en/express/small_business_solutions.html)
  - (better for international shipping)

All of these companies should be able to provide information and answer your questions before you sign up for an account.

Moreover, YOU WILL NEED:

- A scale
- Packing supplies, such as boxes, padded envelopes, tape, packing materials, and, if you want, branding for packages.
- An estimate of every item's weight and size to determine shipping prices.

It's also up to you to offer expedited shipping. It is an additional workload and stressor for small businesses, although an excellent customer service if you can provide it. You might also consider only offering it right before big gift-giving occasions, such as Hanukkah or Christmas.

## Delivery

Believe it or not, you could offer a local delivery service. The advent of third party services, such as TaskRabbit or Postmates, make this a reality for many businesses, although at a premium price.

You will know best what your customers will want, so you should consider what your market will bear in terms of price.

*However keep yourself open to possibilities, research the options, and be ready to suggest it to a customer who may really value the service.* It is better to be prepared with offers rather than bereft of ideas.

JP Centre/South Main Streets is looking into the idea of subsidizing a delivery service for our local businesses. It would be a service for the strict use of Jamaica Plain businesses for deliveries within Jamaica Plain. Please let us know if you would like to receive updates.

## What if your customer isn't online?

This might be old school, but consider mail order. You can create and mail a "catalog" to special customers. Desktop publishing is so easy - you can offer curated "catalogs" of select products that you know your customer will like, and mail copies to these customers with a suggestion to call in their order. Just be sure to label products with unique identifiers to avoid confusion.

JP Centre/South Main Streets would welcome your suggestions to our toolkit!

## Pricing Tip

A flat fee will take the guesswork out of shipping and delivery prices. Most customers are fine with a flat fee for shipping. Hence, you just need to pick a shipping or delivery fee that works for most of your products, and covers the basic cost. You should however exclude any products that are extraordinarily large or heavy for shipping or delivery - product listings should note a different fee due to its size and weight.