



Small Business Best Practices

Creative examples to use in your own business

Provided by the Iowa Retail Initiative
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Business is not as usual for all small businesses during this pandemic time. Now is the time to get creative and learn great ways to connect with customers through some best practices you can implement in your own business or in your communities.

All Small Businesses:

Increase web presence by making sure your website is updated. You can also add a sign-up form to collect emails. Incentivize potential customers to sign up by offering discounts and newsletters. Look to connect with customers through social media and be sure to have links back to your website on all platforms. Some small businesses like, [Lefty's Live Music](#), are still conducting business through social media platforms. They are both delivering cocktails and streaming their concerts through their Facebook page.



Send updates via email to your customers. Make sure your email list is clean and current. Some examples of updates to include are: store hour changes; event cancelations or postponements; how customers can access and support your business virtually; and new business procedures (i.e. delivery, pickup, appointments). Offer customized email depending on type of customer (i.e. regular patron, referrals, targeted new customers).

Communicate workplace safety to educate your customers. Make sure to let them know about your in-store store cleaning protocols, social distancing requirements, order fulfillment options such as curbside pick-up, provision of hand sanitizer or other disinfectant in appropriate areas, and efforts to protect vulnerable customers. Grocery stores are communicating with their customers on all the efforts to keep their stores clean and safe including having special hours of shopping for seniors.

Workforce considerations to keeping your dedicated employees. Consider reducing your hours of operation to reduce the hours of work. Also, consider furloughs instead of layoffs. While layoffs terminate employment and your relationship with your employees, furloughs allow you to keep them on your payroll but on unpaid leave of absence.

Retail Stores:

Implement online shopping like [Prime Roast Coffee](#). Their new website lists all their products where customers can shop and have their orders shipped directly to their homes. They also utilize social media by hosting “how to” videos, virtual happy hours, and sharing news on their employees.

Offer delivery so your customers feel safer shopping locally. Utilizing their Facebook page, [Cecil K's Hometown Market](#) provides frequent updates, offers grocery delivery and curbside pick-up. They have even provided shoppers maps of their store so customers can make their grocery list in order of the product location.

Offer curbside pick-up options to remain “open” for your customers. [Ted's Sports](#) not only offers delivery or curbside pick-up for their customers, they also schedule virtual fittings to ensure the right size.

Limit the number of people in the store or special hours for those at most risk.

Restaurants:

Online ordering and delivery options are needed now. If you do not already have delivery at your restaurant and do not have the capacity to start delivery, consider utilizing one of the online ordering and delivery marketplaces such as [MyTown2Go](#), [Food Dudes Delivery](#), [Grubhub](#), [Door Dash](#), or [Uber Eats](#).



Curbside pick-up via phone or online orders. You can also keep your customers well fed by offering a curbside pick-up option. Your restaurant does not even have to have online ordering available to start this option, just make sure to advertise well and have your phone ready.

[Cornbred](#) restaurant highlighted their Easter curbside pick-up specials through their website, twitter, and Facebook. Referencing their online menu, customers could order and pay via the phone. Customers then just call when arriving at the restaurant and their orders are delivered directly to their car.

Take-out cocktails / mocktails are a way to continue the happy hour tradition. Iowa has temporarily allowed any business with a [Class C liquor license](#) to sell liquor and wine to go. This provides bars and restaurants the opportunity to sell unopened original containers of liquor. You can find many examples of rotating take home versions of specialty cocktails now on local restaurants' menus.

Communities:

Create community-based social media to promote or support local businesses. The Great Grey Tee Project at [Bulldog Design](#) was set up to help their local community's businesses. A large portion of each t-shirt sale goes to the local business that customers choose to support.

Gift cards sold for community small businesses provide incentives to shop locally. The Asheville, NC community has started the movement to buy gift cards from local businesses to show support. [AshvilleStrong](#) provides one website for any local business to sell their gift cards.

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Resources:

COVID-19 Resources for Communities, Businesses, Local Governments, and Nonprofits. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/CED-COVID-19-resources>

Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division. (2019). *License Classifications*. State of Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division. <https://abd.iowa.gov/license-classifications>

Iowa Retail Initiative. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/iowa-retail-initiative>

Long, Courtney. (2020). *COVID 19: Overview and connection to our food supply and value chain*. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm, Food, and Enterprise Development Program. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ffed/ffed-covid-resources/>

SaveYour.Town. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://saveyour.town/>

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