

Maine Retail Recovery- COVID, Holiday Shopping and E-Commerce

My mom loves mysteries. She literally reads one or two a day every day. So she ended up teaching courses on mystery novels at Bali, the Brandeis OSHA, lifelong learning Institute, basically in adult ed run through Brandeis university. After she retired, she taught courses on women, detectives murder in ethnic communities, Nordic mysteries, and others.

Then covert head. All in person classes canceled. Well, Brandeis wasn't about to give back all the fees they collected for adult ed. So they told the instructors that they were moving to zoom and the instructors would have to teach remotely using zoom. My mom was not super excited. She's in her mid seventies.

She doesn't have a Facebook account. She actually doesn't even have a microwave, but that's another story. No, she didn't want to stop teaching. So she got help from the IT department and learned how to run classes via zoom. So she could finish out the semester. Now, these days she's totally comfortable teaching on the platform and it started teaching detectives with disabilities for the fall semester.

When I asked her for any big wins in service of this presentation, she told me that every class Bali, but one finished successfully on top of that, she continued, there are more classes and members this fall term than yeah. Ever before classes include ones in music, art, history, science, and literature. And we're doing things via zoom that we need never could have done or thought possible before.

Considering that Bali members range from 60 to 93, most of whom had never heard or used zoom before March. That's quite an achievement. I'd agree. The point of the story is this. If you're waiting for things to get back to normal, they won't, the pandemic has been going on long enough. People's behaviors have changed for good, or at least they've changed permanently.

People who've learned new digital skills. They're comfortable doing more of their research and shopping online for some people. They prefer it. When Colin first hit, my girlfriend started getting all of her groceries delivered. It wasn't anything she had done before, and she's not keen on letting somebody else pick out her produce, but there were a lot of unknowns back then and she felt safer groceries that way.

Well, now we know more about the virus, but Jen still isn't going to grocery stores. She's not afraid. She has fine said it's easier to get things delivered that she's ordered online. We're in the news and there's no going back to the old normal, your customers, your employees, and you have all been in this too long.

We've developed new skills and new hats. Well, I may not have all the answers on how you can move forward from survival to recovery. I can tell you one thing that will actually not work standing still. Things have changed and they will continue to change and you need to

evolve with them. The title of this presentation was going to be building an effective eCommerce site for COVID and beyond.

However, as I did my research and as I review the companies listed in the retail association of Maine's website directory, I realized that many of you may not need an eCommerce site on your road to recovery. So although it will be providing lots of great e-commerce recommendations in today's presentation.

I'm also going to be providing advice that will work for any retail establishment. Even if you don't plan on collecting money at your website, even if you don't want or need shopping card at your site. For those other humans don't know me. My name is Rich Brooks and I'm the president of Flight New Media.

I'm also the founder of Agents of Change, a weekly cast and an annual conference. All about digital marketing. I'm also the tech guru on two Oh Seven. And I wrote a book called The Lead Machine, the small business guide to digital marketing. And most recently I cofounded Fast Forward Me a resource for growing main companies.

In other words, this is my sandbox and this is where I like to play now at Flight New Media, we often talk about the bare essentials of digital marketing. It's a framework we've developed over the years to help businesses understand how to approach their digital marketing. And it works for lead generation sites, as well as eCommerce sites.

BEAR is an acronym the bees were built, or how do you build a website that turns visitors into customers a is for a tract, or how do you drive those people to your website in the first place R stands for attain? Or how do you stay in touch with people after they've left your site? And the E is for evaluate or how do you know if any of this is working?

We'll touch on a number of these today. Now don't BU if you just saw this come up on your screen, but one big winner in COVID has been Amazon love them or hate them. There's a good reason why they've exploded. They have a wide variety of products, basically everything, a consumer needs. They have low prices.

They benefit from an economy of scale. Well, it's hard for small retail operation to match. They have free shipping on most products. In fact, shipping costs have been cited as well. One of the main reasons why people abandon online shopping cards, they have an easy return policy. Most, most products can be returned for free.

If home delivery, obviously the feeling of safety and ease of use, and then there's Amazon Prime. And there's the idea that you should buy from Amazon to make your money back on Prime. If you've already bought it, there's a psychological incentive to use them because we've already put money in. I don't share this because I want to rub salt in the wound, but rather because it's important to know our competition strengths and why people might choose them over us.

Where possible we should try to adopt what they're doing. Free shipping, easy return policies, home delivery, and other elements can be copied or even improved upon and

where it's not possible. You can try selling against them, Amazon isn't, everything store. And sometimes people are looking for expertise in a given area.

Plus you have advantage, which is an Amazon does not now. Not all of these may be true for your individual business for you retail shop, but where they are true, you should lean into them in your marketing advertising, and especially your website. Your local, local is a competitive advantage. People want to do business with locally owned businesses.

Whenever possible. You have a storefront, not everyone's comfortable in shops right now. Most people are in that number. Yeah. Is growing. Make sure people realize that you have a physical space. They can explore. You offer things that Amazon doesn't, I might be able to buy a bike through Amazon, but I can't get a tuneup or repair service there.

I can buy a curing machine through Amazon, but they can't serve me a hot cup of coffee. Promote the things that Amazon can't offer. You're a person. I mean, sure. So is Jeff Bezos, but who in the state of Maine can relate to a guy like that? Leverage yourself and the other humans who work with you to remind people that their fellow Mainers work at your store and will be serving them.

You offer same day service and they can pick up their order in store curbside or you'll deliver it. You sell your own products. You're minority owned, women owned, veteran owned, family owned. You're a member of the retail association of Maine, the chamber of commerce Kiwanis, the Elks club, the Institute for family owned business.

Your employees are Mainers your part of the community. Show those local badges to anchor the idea that you're part of the fabric of Maine. Okay.

It's important to understand why people buy neuroscience research from Harvard professor Gerald Zaltman shows that we buy based on emotion, and then we use logic to justify our decisions. Why is this important? Because if you focus your website, your communications, and all of your marketing on the logical reasons, why people should buy price, free delivery, money back guarantee, you're missing out on some of the most persuasive arguments.

How people feel about buying from you? Why people buy Apple products, you Mac books, I-phones and Apple watch is really make you more creative or do they just make you look like you're a creative person. And how about Tom shoes? The company that gives away a free pair of shoes to a needy person with every pair they sell.

Do you buy them? Because the way they make your feet feel or because how they make your soul feel or secretly, because you want other people to look at your shoes and see what a giving person you are. Don't worry. I won't tell. So how does this impact your marketing and your website? People want more than a product or a service.

They want a story they can share. They want to feel connected to the maker or seller, and they want to feel good about their purchase. And when you give them that they'll spend more, their loyalty will increase and they'll tell all their friends and leave online reviews and you can give them this story, this relationship and this feeling.

By using the right voice and imagery. When your website, your social media and your email communications, obviously I'm not talking about just being deceptive here. I don't want you to lie, but I want you to move past just talking about product specs. Okay. Let's keep that in mind. As we shift to talk about some specific tips that you can employ at your website to help your recovery and generate more foot traffic and website traffic.

The first thing to keep in mind is the overall design of the site being as small locally owned businesses. No excuse not to have a professionally designed website. That's easy for your customers to use. Now. Many of you want to put everything on the homepage list, every product, every service, every offering, how long you've been in business, why you opened up your shop and more, but keep in mind this very important fact, your website isn't for you.

Let me repeat that your website isn't for you. Your website is for your customer, your customer, who maybe has never visited your website and doesn't know their way around, who doesn't need it. Every product you have to sell, but is looking for just one specific product, determine the most important information for your typical site visitor and make it impossible.

Not to trip over. Maybe it's your COVID hours, maybe at your curbside pickup or delivery options, maybe it's your safety precautions. Maybe it's the fact you take Venmo, whatever it is, make sure that it appears above the fold. You also want to enhance your local status. You want both Google and your customers to know that you're local, here's some tips to ensure this create a page for each location.

If you have storefronts or offices in Bangor, Portland Nelsworth, then you need a page for each of those spots. You need to fill that page with customized information about the location that should include unique content about the town or neighborhood, including local landmark or attractions, sports teams, schools, parks, and so on photographs of the building or store the stores, hours, stores, managers, or employees.

The street address directions from major points of entry and an embedded Google map. If this feels like overkill, it's not. I recently spoke to a credit union who had locations in neighboring towns just about a mile from each other and they felt this wasn't worth it. It is, it makes a difference when some searches for credit union near me or credit union and Gore.

If you only have one location, I'd still recommend creating a page about your city or neighborhood. I'd also recommend putting your address and even an embedded Google map in the footer of your website, so that it appears on every single page off your site. It's important to get listed in all the local directories, but the most important one is Google my business or GMB.

If you haven't set up GMB for your company yet, go do it. The moment today's event is over. And do it for each location. If you have more than one, I'm not going to go into too much detail about GMB as we have some of that additional resources and training on the flight, new media website, which I'll share in the followup email, but through your GMB listing, you

can upload hours, location, descriptions, video photos, and movies to greatly increase your online visibility and your chances of appearing in local searches and near me searches.

You should also be using custom photography. You want to immediately communicate to site visitors that you are a real retail operation and you can't do that through stock photography. There's a time and place for stock photography. Like when you're putting your slides together for presentation last minute, and there's a pandemic, so you can't go out and take photos.

But not for key places on your website. And if you want people to shop local, you should as well. There are countless local photographers who you can hire by the hour, half, day or a day to take amazing photos that you can use on your website and other marketing and advertising. Collateral include photos of your storefront, your interiors, your people, and your products, especially if they're your own products.

And it may be hard to tell in this picture, but Nobel barbecue on their website. These are all custom photos. And you can tell that because all the placemats there have the Nobel barbecue, I'll go on them. Even if you're not planning on a full blown eCommerce solution to your current website, there are functionality, handouts that you can include to offer a, a better experience.

They're booking widgets. And if you run a business that requires appointments like so many businesses these days do make sure that you allow people to book those appointments at your website. Different booking. Widgets can be configured with payment. If you require people to put a deposit down when they book a time.

Another important feature is SMS or short messaging service. People have their phones with them always. And especially when they're out running errands, letting people know their order is ready or their table is available in real time can increase conversions and just the act of getting them to give you their digits, maybe enough to keep them from shopping elsewhere because they've made that commitment to you.

An ordering tools, even if you're going to collect money, when people show up, you can still take their orders at your website. So they can self serve. Self-serve is a critical feature that a lot of people are looking for these days. Also make it possible for people to order at a specific time. I appreciate their challenges to this, but many times I've wanted order takeout for the end of the day.

And there was no way to manage that. And I realized now there's one thing that I did forget here. And that's chatbots. Chatbots are very popular these days on platforms like Facebook, they're usually a monthly fee that you pay to a company like many chat. And what chatbots do is they allow people to self serve.

If you can't afford to have somebody. Always on a chat, which is kind of expensive and maybe not needed 24 seven. You can at least invest in a chat bot. And these are things that can go on your Facebook page, but it can also go on your website. So when people are coming, you can actually create scripts ahead of time and feed them into this chat bot.

So that people who are coming to the website, maybe after hours, or maybe you're just busy doing other things, there'll be able to get most of their questions answered, whether it be about hours or products or inventory or whatever it may be. You can program all that information into your chat bot. And when the chat bot gets to point where it can't help that person anymore, they can at least then, uh, send those people over to you.

So a chat bot would be something that would definitely be on my list for more bells and whistles that you'd be on both. E-commerce. And other retail websites

let's shift to e-commerce. Now, maybe you already have a shopping cart at your website or you're planning on adding one SU what are some of the things you can do to increase the likelihood that a shop visitor will end up spending some money with you? Well, let's start with retail operations that haven't yet pulled the trigger on eCommerce.

When you re and I interviewed Kima kennel from IBET creative on an episode of the fastforward main podcast earlier this year, she said, it's really important to consider what your goals are. She went on to say, if you are an established retailer and you want to grow more and online, your eCommerce strategy may be just that you want to have your customers browse online and then make a purchase in store.

So you're not actually looking for growth in eCommerce sales, but you're looking for growth and repeat customers and overall sales growth. If you do decide to jump into having a shopping cart, there's still plenty of options out there. Shopify is a very popular platform as is relatively easy to use and fairly scalable.

It's often considered to be the WordPress for e-commerce. WordPress is another platform retailers turn to because it has so many e-commerce plugins, the most popular, which is probably woo commerce. Bigger retail operations might offer Magento, which carries a higher price point and has a steeper learning curve, but integrates well with POS systems.

I don't want to get into a Ford versus Chevy versus Toyota type of discussion here, because there are literally thousands of shopping cards that you could use on your website. Let's just say there are platforms for every size and budget and no one platform is right for every type of business. The most important thing to figure out is what are your goals for eCommerce?

Do you really just want people to browser offerings online so they can make an informed decision in store? You want to start by just selling some highly profitable products rather than your entire inventory. Do you want to be able to connect your POS to your eCommerce and create a fully Omni channel solution on your way to world domination?

Your goals will help determine both your platform and your path

much. If not all of your new traffic, your eCommerce site is going to come from the search engines, both paid and organic. The interesting thing about SEL also known as search engine optimization is that Google's getting so sophisticated. The developing content for search engines, isn't much different than developing content for people.

In other words, doing what's best for your customers. We'll probably make Google happy too, because SEO is critical to your e-commerce success. And because it's an alignment with your customer's needs. And because I love SEO, let's look at improving your eCommerce site with an SEO lens in place. First up, you want to keep your site structure simple and scalable.

You never want a product to be more than three clicks away from the homepage. Otherwise the trust and authority that your homepage is built up with Google will be diluted and won't flow properly to those far away pages. Meaning it's going to be harder for those pages to rank well and harder for you to sell the simply put, think about your site's structure as homepage.

Category pages, sub category pages and product pages. With this structure, people who land on your homepage are never more than three clicks away from a product. And yet you can scale up as much as you need. Category pages are the pages that often list all the products in a given vertical and possibly the sub category pages as well.

The category page may be about running shoes with sub category pages on women's running shoes and men's running shoes and the running shoes themselves would then be on product pages. Now, of course, there should be more than this, just these pages on your website. You want pages for about us, contact us staff locations, privacy, epilogue, and more.

One way that you can increase your chances of getting found through organic search is by developing rich category pages. Category pages are the pages are usually list a bunch of products. And like I said, sub categories, this means adding more copy and even photography about a given category to the category page.

In this example, where I searched for tomato seeds, you can see that there are several photo paragraphs talking about tomato seeds. Before we get to the actual products. This is helpful because it helps Google understand what this page is all about. Now, this is not always the case. In fact, this was my third attempt to find an example that of a category page that did have copy on it.

Searches for bird seeds and searches for dog collars just brought me to category pages that should mean nothing more than links to Birdsy product pages and dog color product pages respectfully. However in those searches, the top organic results were home Depot in PetSmart. Google tends to reward well-known national established brands with lots of authority over small retail shops, at least in the organic results, but you can increase your chances of appearing on that first page in Google by creating informative content on your category and subcategory pages.

Well-developed category pages can also help you rank higher in local search. That little map pack that you see on some Google searches. If Google feels that the searcher may be looking for a local provider, my search for bird seed returned three local places. I can buy bird seed along with those e-commerce, uh, ads and shopping options.

In your shopping cart, every product needs its own page. That page should have a keyword rich page title, Meadows description, photo, and product descriptions. Most people when

sending a page for their product scrimp on copy. If they add any copy at all, don't make that mistake. Well, it may be true that humans don't read.

Although some of us still do Google reads everything on your page and remembers it, or at least it indexes it. Now here, it doesn't look like there's a whole lot of copy on this page, but there's actually a lot more copy. That's slightly hidden that you press the plus sign for and you get a lot more copy still.

I think this particular page could use even more. Copy. If you're selling a bicycle on a given page and someone is searching for a commuter bike and someone else is searching for a 10 speed bike and someone else is searching for a blue bike and someone else is searching for a woman's bike. And this bike that you have is all of these things.

And you've done a good job of explaining that. Then Google might serve up this page to all of those different people. How many words should you include on your product pages? Well, there is no magic number. But if there were, it would be 1000 yes. Research shows that there's a correlation, not causation between longer content.

In higher ranking at Google. Now, if you have hundreds of product pages, I don't expect you to write a thousand word essay on each one. Maybe start with just some of your best sellers or most profitable products and continue to work through the list. And here's a pro tip from our friends at Backlinko a well-respected SEO blog.

You can add modifiers to your page titles, like buy or best as that can help you with some longterm searches that people do. It's also been shown to increase the click through rates. When people see free shipping or cheap in your title tags, which shows up as the big blue link in the search results.

Another element you'll want to include in your product pages and through your eCommerce store is reviews. These come standard on a lot of shopping cards, but you want to make sure they're configured correctly. This should be done using something called schema, which helps search engines. Understand what the page is about.

One of the most popular types of schema. And one of the most widely adopted is for reviews. And although Google is often playing around with how it displays results, it often shows the reviews of five star reviews right on the search engine results page, which means that you can increase your footprint on Google's first page by including the review scheme as probably something your developers won't kind of need to get involved with.

Now let's talk about blog posts because traditionally it is difficult to rank organically, especially for a small retail operation, uh, when there's e-commerce or purchasing involved. Now, it's very important to understand that Google has become very good at understanding user intent. Some people may just be looking for information and that's where an educational blog post could be very beneficial.

So Google might serve that type of result up. I did a search for beginner guide to table saws and the search results included several YouTube videos, tips, and tricks, pages, and articles

with product recommendations. Other people may be further along in their customer journey and they're starting to consider different solutions to a given problem.

The search simply for table saws brought up Google display ads and eCommerce pages. Google obviously felt that served the intent of the search. The search for table saw is near me, where I Google display ads again, but also local retail options. I share this because blog post can be a great way of getting to the top of Google, but this tactic is more likely to work when Google, I think so blog posts will best serve the searcher's intent.

In other words, it might be better for top of funnel searches.

So there's a number of different blog post types that you can use for your eCommerce store. Good ideas for blogs include review posts, comparison posts, and ranking posts. And we've been talking about blogs, but I just want to have an aside for a moment. Say that video is becoming much more prevalent. For eCommerce.

And so if you don't mind getting in front of the, uh, camera to record some of these reviews, that can be very powerful. And we're starting to see a trend where people are putting video reviews, store owners are putting video reviews right on the product pages so people can see them. So whether it's written word or visual, make sure that you're including this type of content on your website.

For example, if you just got in the latest Nikon DSLR or a brand new blend of coffee, consider writing an in depth review of the product and a blog post, and then linking from the article to the product page product. Plus review is a popular search. As people are looking for more information to make an informed decision comparison, post can be even more powerful as you can work in multiple products to the same article and link to their product pages on your site.

And they're popular to just look at this Google search suggest as soon as I can typed in trigger versus when looking at smokers and I didn't even spell trigger. Right. All the top results for Trager burse pit boss were all blog posts comparing the two and the top results where eCommerce sites or review sites that were owned by eCommerce sites, ranking posts can be even more powerful than that.

And you can throw in even more products to the post. Top 10 lists are popular, but there's really no limit to what you can include. One of the top results for table saws was a top 10 list, even though it was limited to the table saws available at this particular store. The other thing you can do with ranking posts is use different lenses to create a lot more posts.

For example, you could write a post on top 10 table saws for beginners, another one for hobbyist and a third top 10 list for professional contractors, you could create a list of top 10 kettlebell exercises for women and a separate list for men. Best snowblowers for small driveways, large driveways and sidewalks.

You get the idea, and this is in creating content for content sick. These are all great posts that can help your customer make an informed decision while driving qualified traffic to your website.

Let's talk a moment about paid search or search advertising. If you do a search for the product you're trying to sell, and you see ads at the top of the search results, either display ads, like the kind you're seeing on the screen right now, or text ads. Then you must create an ad budget for the search engines.

When people are ready to buy, they don't care. If the result they're seeing is organic, local sponsored or an ad, they just want relevant result. And I've talked to plenty of business owners that say, I never click on those ads. Well, Google makes about \$40 billion a quarter on selling those ads. So somebody's clicking on them and they may be clicking over to your competition.

If you're not seeing ads for the products you carry, I'd actually be worried. Why isn't anyone else advertising these products to generate sales? If you're just using ads on a few products, you can probably manage your ads fairly easily, but if you're advertising hundreds of products on search, then you're probably going to need a more robust solution that connects with Google through an API.

The ins and outs of Google ads are beyond the scope of today's presentation. I just want to make sure that you understand that most eCommerce store rely on search as to succeed. And Google makes more money when they run ads, which pushes organic and local results further down the page, making them less relevant.

The nice thing about search ads is they're very trackable. So you can see which ads are working and providing a positive ROI, and which ones are just draining your ad spend. Somebody on your team should be monitoring your ads and creating negative keywords and shutting off underperforming ads on a regular basis.

And if you can't handle that in house, you really should be looking for some outside support on that.

Now, one of the things that you can do is drop a pixel on a site visitor, if you're not sure what that means. Let me explain a pixel is a snippet of code. That websites use to tag you when you visit their site, for example, you or your developer, and installing Facebook pixel on your brother CDE website.

When someone comes to look at bird seed, assuming they have a Facebook account, they are tagged not unlike scientists, tracking endangered animals or aliens monitoring humans after duction. If they leave your site without buying anything, you can still stay in front of them with retargeting. After they've left your site in their newsfeed on Facebook and Instagram, they'll see ads for different types of bird seed available at your website.

These type of ads targeting what's called a warm audience can be very effective and cost effective compared to targeting cold audiences and people who don't know Facebook retargeting is probably the most popular retargeting, but there's retargeting pixels available for almost every social media platform, as well as Google and all of its partners.

On YouTube, you can show pre-roll videos. Those ads that show before the video, people were planning on watching to those website audiences as well. If you've ever picked up a

new hobby or interest, you may become hyper aware of how much you're being retargeted on these platforms. As suddenly in my case, I stopped seeing ads for social media management software and started seeing ads for woodworking tools, magazines, and memberships.

Although I'm a strong believer in walk before you can run your retargeting campaigns can become very sophisticated. If someone visits your campus, think eCommerce store and looks at the lantern product pages, you can retarget them with the products they viewed or related products, rather than just a broad ad about camping gear in general, which brings up an important point.

You can set up your retargeting pixel so that once people purchase something or take another desired action, you can choose not to retarget them saving your ad budget for better prospects or another approach would be if somebody buys a lantern on your camping site, you could retarget them with related products, such as headlamps or flashlights or sleeping bags.

There's a lot of TA technical and strategy behind retargeting that goes beyond the scope of today's conversation. I know I keep saying that, but I want to make sure that you guys have ideas on the different ways you can succeed. So if you have questions, I'll try and answer them during Q and a, or you can reach out to me privately.

If you've ever stumbled. I want to talk about email for a minute. If you've ever stumbled across our flight blog or listen to my agents of change podcast on digital marketing, you know, that I am all in on email for just about every type of thing. But for retail business email is a must. It is essential.

And for eCommerce sites, there are specific features that you should be looking for in an email service provider or an ESP. Why do I feel so passionate? What about adding email marketing to your online retail operations? Because emails trigger action. They can't be ignored. When your email arrives in your customer's inbox, they have to act, they can open it, read it, click on your products, which can lead them to browse, click and buy at your store, or they can unsubscribe or they get hit delete without reading it.

But at least they saw your branding. Compare that to your Google ads that will never be seen unless they do another search or your Facebook posts or ads they're scrolling past never to be seen again. Email also offers amazing ROI. The monthly cost of your email platform is a fraction of what your ad buy will be with much better results.

I believe that's because you're usually speaking to a warm audience. People who knew, Oh, you are your brand people who are interested enough to sign up for your email newsletter or bought from you in the past. Although it's exciting to get a new customer. It's more effective to market, to existing customers and get them to buy again.

Done, right. Email is for selling a seven, assuming that you built your list ethically and your subscribers know that you're selling product to email your Google analytics, your sales reports and your bottom line will all show a bump in sync with your email blasts. It's also a perfect channel to build rapport.

Unlike social media, where you're usually having a public conversation, email has a more intimate feel. Or at least it does when it's done, right. It's a place where your brand voice comes through. You can tell stories and you can build it, your relationship with your customer. Now I've, I've named checked op in signups ethics.

That's because I'm assuming you've gathered all your emails ethically and shame on you. If you did. Dante's Inferno has one circle of hell, reserved for marketers who add people to an email list without permission. And trust me. It's a warm one for informational or promotional emails. You need permission to add someone to your list for transactional emails that are about the order, the shipping or the delivery, and potentially any followup permission is implied for that transaction.

And of course, there's a lot of gray area in between.

For e-commerce, it's critical that you choose an email platform that supports your e-commerce needs and objectives. While a general tool like constant contact or MailChimp can certainly help. They don't necessarily have all the bells and whistles that you're looking for. Although MailChimp continues to add more advanced tools.

Sometimes the eCommerce platform you're using has a built an email program with the features you need. Shopify does the commerce does, and you can connect them to external tools like MailChimp. If you're more comfortable using MailChimp's interface. For example, another excellent choice. It's clever.

Although we have a big discussion going on at our company, how you actually pronounce this company's name, I'm calling it Coveo until we're approved. Otherwise. Covata was built in connections to a wide variety of eCommerce platforms, including Shopify and commerce. And it can be made to pair with just about any e-commerce solution.

We're using it right now with a couple of eCommerce clients with great success. And it has, must have features that your retail or eCommerce site needs. What are these must have features. Well, while you were evaluating whatever platform you want to choose, there are a number of must have features that you just can't live without the first one.

And maybe the sexiest one quite honestly, is the abandoned cart emails. Did you know that 65 to 75% of products put in shopping carts get left there. If you have your visitor's email address, IO and other advanced ESPs can automate emails right into the shopper's inbox. Studies show that these abandoned cart emails have a high open and click through rate as well as purchase rates of up to 30% that makes this feature no brainer.

In my opinion, purchase confirmation and shipping confirmation emails. These features seem obvious, but also pay attention to the way these look are they easy to read, even on a mobile device, do they allow for your branding? Remember, this is a place to get people excited about their upcoming delivery.

Upselling, this we've all seen the, uh, upsells or related products on eCommerce product pages, but you can also remind people of these upsells after they've purchased via email,

what products should people have purchase when they bought an item from your store?
Why not have upsells automatically delivered into their inbox after a set period of time?

Once you set these up, you don't need to send these emails manually. It's all automated. Review emails. These are great for getting more reviews for products on your website. Nothing looks LaMer than an eCommerce site with tons of unreviewed products, more reviews. It was more social proof of not just the product, but of your store.

You can send out automated emails that include a picture of the product, of what they just purchased with a link to where they can leave a review. These can even be configured for a second or third followup. If they don't leave a review the first time around just don't be a jerk about it. Triggered events, emails, emails can be triggered based on customer product or activity.

You could automate an email after someone buys their first product from your store, enticing them towards multiple purchases, or you could set up a triggered email after a recent purchase when someone becomes a loyal customer, depending on how you define it. Similarly, if someone hasn't brought bought from you in three or six months, the system can send out them an email to woo them back into the fold.

Maybe with a discount code, you can even let people know when something that's on their wishlist or that was abandoned in their cart is now on sale. And again, all of this can be automated. So you only need to put it together once. So I want to wrap up today by reminding you that things are not going to go back to the old normal.

We've been forced to research and shop online. We know we can visit stores, do curbside pickup or have products delivered. There's no putting the genie back in the bottle. Start with your goals. Determine if you're looking for a full fledged eCommerce solution, or just want to increase the ability to bring customers into your store or to your curbside.

Whether you're planning on adding a full flood shopping cart to your site, or just to entice people to visit your business through your site, you need to make the changes necessary to increase your online visibility, improve visitor experience and generate revenue to move from survival to recovery.

Invest in local SEO. Even if you're not adding a shopping cart, you need to appear in local search results. When people want to buy locally, we've talked about the things you can do on your site, as well as using local directories, especially Google my business, whatever your eCommerce platform develop a simple, scalable site that leverages categories, subcategories and private pages.

Develop a budget for ads that include shopping ads on Google and retargeting ads on social media platforms. And lastly use an email service provider and ESP that is designed for eCommerce sites and allows you to send triggered emails. This was more of an overview of what you need to consider for your e-commerce needs rather than a deep dive into any one area.

So if you have questions, we have just a few minutes. Right now you can ask a, a, can take one or two questions or feel free to reach out to me afterwards, as you can see on your screen, my email is rich. Add, take flight.com and you can contact me through take flight.com website and I'm everywhere online as the rich Brooks.

Appreciate the time that you've given me today. I did see one question come into the Q and a, so I'll check there first and then I'll see if there's any other questions in the chat as well. And then we'll shift over to our second presentation of the day. The question was, is there a chapter, what service that you suggest perhaps it would send the messages to text?

This is something I'm going to have to research for you because I don't know one that works both for the website and for text drift is a Bueller, um, chat bot that works on websites. But it is a little bit expensive and there are some other less expensive options as well. And for Facebook, there's a lot of different options, but the majority of people I see seem to be gravitating towards many chat.

And that was the chat bot we use for our agents of change conference. So that would probably be where I start my search.

All right. And now we are back. Uh, if you did have any other questions, please let me know what they are, but it looks like those are all the questions for the first session today. So feel free to stand up, stretch, uh, pet pitcher, hedgehog, whatever you need to do to get ready for our second presentation of the day, uh, from the always high energy Yuri Novaka off.

So Yuri is a transformer, a transformative leader in the business of creating emotional, personal, and engaging experiences. He is a cohost of fast forward, main podcast and a frequent contributor on topics of UX user experience. For those of you not in the know a gamification and innovation. In 2017 first contributions to the digital initiatives of Machaya savings bank.

Yuri was named emerging leader by the bank administration Institute. A year later, he was presented with a rising star award from the new England financial marketing association. Yuri holds two undergraduate and two graduate degrees with the recent additions of executive leadership degrees from the Wharton school in strategic leadership and Rutgers university and customer experience.

He works full time, try a savings bank as the assistant vice president of customer experience. And I consider him to be a good friend of mine. Very excited to be checking in with URI. URI the floor is yours. Well, thank you very much, rich, uh, always a pleasure to, uh, to work with you and check in with you.

And, uh, as an attendee of the first, uh, presentation of the day and the first session of the day, I want to say. An incredible job. You set a new standard of excellence for me personally, in terms of, uh, delivering presentations. Um, I wish I've seen that before. I would definitely incorporate it into my, I slides in everything that I have to share with, uh, with our audience and the guests, but, uh, I'll do my best either way.

Uh, as long as they can deliver, you know, value to the participants, that's all I care about. So let me share my slides and, uh, we'll go from there. All right. So the topic of my presentation is delivering amazing retail customer experience. So. Just a few things about me that you, I may have not heard, uh, from what Rachel already said.

Um, you can probably tell that I'm a nerd. You know, I like to read, I like to learn and, um, The thing that I find myself doing, you know, more often than not is actually sharing information that I acquire, uh, through the hours of, you know, spending my time with books or, you know, talking to my mentors or friends that are, you know, successful in this industry.

And, you know, The, the thing that I'm holding in my bag in my hand actually is, is a book. Uh, yeah. You know, one of the largest, uh, books that I've ever had, or, you know, still have in my collection, it's by, uh, Seth Gordon. Yeah. But anyway, uh, let's not waste time. Let's dive right in. So. Why do we want to talk about a customer experience and then, you know, it's important, uh, for the, the growth of your business?

Well, let, let me ask you these questions. Are your customers more or less demanding?

Are you seeing more or less insights and availability of analytics and, uh, and data. And the third question is shorter or longer product life cycles. And especially those of you who are in the, um, Those of you who are in the kinda like, you know, the, the, the digital space, you know, you, you, you can probably see the trend that the digital products are starting to, uh, diminish their value, you know, a lot faster than they, uh, they used to do in the past.

And the kind of like the first mover advantage is no longer, uh, Uh, the, the case and the law lot of situations, because, you know, in, especially in the digital place, uh, the services and the products, you know, tend to be, uh, tend to be replicated fairly quickly. Right. Um, one of the observations that I wanted to share with you that battered customer experience, uh, leads to more loyal customers.

So a couple of things that I wanted to unpack here, um, organizational customer experience ease the reflection of its culture. And operating processes. So the type of people you hire, how do you treat your employees? How do you treat your customers and ultimately what type of person, the processes you have in place determines the quality of the customer experience.

And when we're talking about, about a loyalty and a, the loyal customers, it's important to understand that loyalty. It's not just some kind of like an tangible thing that, um, you know, and truly touch or comprehend, but. For me, there are three key elements that, you know, determine loyalty. Uh, first it's, uh, the, uh, repurchase.

The second one is a share of wallet, meaning the, the amount of products, uh, one customer is willing to purchase from you. And, um, The net promoters score or to, uh, you know, to make it simpler, uh, the, the word of mouth, you know, their willingness to recommend your products or services. So, but you know, based on what you see on the screen, right.

The companies in the retail space that have higher customer experience or ratings, they tend to outperform customer experience, companies that have, you know, low or a mediocre experience from the customer, uh, point of view. And they're, you know, for, you know, four categories, recommendation, you know, forgiveness trust, and yeah.

That try new offerings. So, you know, if you're positioning yourself as the, uh, As the customer centric organization with the focus on delivering a refreshingly different customer experience, you're basically we, you know, setting yourself up for success and, uh, if you have not considered are those, um, improvements in terms of, you know, how you deliver the products or how you treat your customers as well as how you treat your employees.

You know, I think, you know, right now is the very. Prime time, um, you know, to do that, you know, COVID-19 has been a little bit of a wake up call, I think, you know, to a lot of practitioners in this space, um, because the things that they believe that would never happen, Hubbard happened overnight. But anyway, let's see.

No think about the ways we can, uh, you know, save guard our future and, you know, uh, be better prepared to handle any type of changes in the consumer behavior. Um, alright, so couple of questions, you know, we need to ask, uh, you know, thinking about the loyalty, what impact do customer service interactions have on customers, future loyalty?

What are the things customer service can do to drive loyalty and how can serve as improve loyalty while still reducing operating costs? Well, um, this is, um, Yeah. You know, this is the picture of a giraffe. I think, you know, you know, a little toys are off. I'm sure. You know, a lot of you are familiar with this story when a family went on it on the trip and, um, Their child when they were ready to leave the resort a lot, couldn't find the little toys.

So, you know, the father left a message, uh, to the concierge and said, Hey, you know, this is what happened. You know, we can't find the toy. The long story short, the employees of the resort. Do you know. Found a toy. And, uh, the also in addition to, you know, sending the toy back to the, the family, they did a little bit of like a, a tour around the facilities with the toy, with the, uh, with the giraffe taken photos and, you know, showing that, you know, giraffe, uh, was, you know, having a good time, you know, relaxing and all that stuff.

And the moment, you know, that year when these, uh, situation transpired, you know, a lot of people start paying closer attention to the wow moments or the moments of delight. How can you go above and beyond, uh, your traditional service or delivering, you know, products in the traditional ways? So a lot of people thought that, you know, the light is, you know, one of the, uh, the drivers, uh, drivers of loyalty, but, you know, after, you know, conducting several year, uh, you know, conducting research and investigation, you know, uh, years, uh, the, uh, the researchers found that the real driver of loyalty is not the, the light.

But meeting expectations off the customers. The other thing is the, uh, what, what do you know detracts, you know, from delivering and building loyalty are the, uh, The effort elements, you know, whether the customer has to make, you know, accomplice context with the company when they're have to, you know, uh, channel switching, basically, you know, when they have, when they, when the customer wants to reserve, uh, resolve the situation

on their own and they begin on the app or on the website, but then they have to end up, you know, calling and ultimately, you know, driving to the place of business.

Um, you know, transfers, you know, make, uh, make the impact, uh, repeated think information, robotics services, you know, policies and process customers have to endure. And the, the hassle factor, like I told you, like I said earlier, you know, driving from one place to another, you know, you know, when you don't really want to do that.

So the, the kind of like the business case for what contributes to loyalty as the part of the customer experience is the effort factor. Um, basically companies that offer a low effort experience, uh, you know, tend to generate greater, uh, you know, repurchases, uh, the customers that are exposed to low for low effort experience, you know, tend to buy more products from the same, um, retailer.

And, uh, if anything, there is basically almost nothing. No, no too low. Um, Negativity in terms of, you know, word of mouth or, uh, you know, disloyalty. So, you know, from pure, like, you know, dollars to dollars, uh, perspective active, improving the, or focusing on decreasing the amount of effort or the friction that your customers experience, uh, you know, with, you know, with your business, you know, is one of the key or critical factors in contributing to the success of your, um, Company, you know, previous examples, you know, from channels, switching to hassle factor.

You know, I, you know, we need to, you know, kind of like, you know, conceptualize the things because, you know, we're not talking, talking about just customer service. We also talking about the customer experience. So, you know, we need to get a little bit, you know, we need to channel a little bit of apathy here and understand, you know, How would the customer feel and how the customer perceives our business, not how we think the customer perceives our business, but how the customer perceives the business and ultimately the, the user experience or, um, you know, from the, the examples that, you know, reach shared is.

What do customers see when they arrived on your website? Are they finding the information they need or if they have to get in touch with you through the traditional, trying to throw additional means like the website? Uh, I mean, through, through the, through the phone, You know, do you have a proper greeting?

You know, is the person that, you know, answering the questions, you know, empathetic and, uh, sides with the customer instead of siding with the business. So those three key companies, opponents are incredibly important and, you know, necessary to be considered. When you think about the developing or designing the service.

Experience the way the customer perceive your business from the service point of view. So the four key components in driving loyalty, channel stickiness, maxi issue, avoidance experience engineering and frontline control. So let's, uh, let's go through the fourth sections real quick. Um, you know, you heard rich say, um, How much, we like a self service option.

Well, you know, if I were to ask you today, you know, would you rather, you know, I mean, we would rather, you know, travel right now, but, you know, with the travel bands and stuff,

it's kind of hardened a little bit, uh, difficult, but anyway, you know, if we were to be in the world where we, uh, can, you know, travel without any, um, Considerations for a, you know, healthy, you know, health concerns.

We'd probably, you know, go with the, uh, with the self service options. So, you know, how many, how many businesses out there that are currently on the line aligned to their listening? Um, yeah. You know, have self service, self service options, you know, if, uh, if, uh, you're not sure offering it, you know, something, you know, to, to, to, to consider, uh, for sure.

Um, the other thing is, you know, we tend to overthink the . Or, you know, tend to over engineer what we believe the customer needs. Okay. And, uh, um, you know, I've experienced that myself where the, the, the, you know, members of certain teams say that well, you know, we believe that customers would prefer to give us a call and of, you know, doing, um, you know, resolving their issues on their own, on the website where in reality, um, Customers don't really have, you know, uh, you know, or, you know, preference major.

There is no major difference in their preferences, in how they want to, um, Uh, you know, resolve their issues or their resolve the concern. Yeah. Because if you think about the first contact resolution, uh, you know, 57% of, you know, fond callers first went to the company's website. But the only reason they had to call is because they couldn't find the information they were looking for.

So that's, you know, unnecessary friction point where I already went to your website. I found I was looking for the information that I needed spend time. And then, you know, I have to, you know, pick up the phone and spend more time trying to address something that could be it been handled through digital or automated channels.

And even in the moment when they're on the phone with your business, they're probably still, um, Still on your website, continuing to, um, you know, look for the, uh, for the resolution to their issues. The other interesting fact, um, that was, you know, the Scarborough is part of the same study was that, um, companies tended to, um, Offer more choices, uh, where in reality customers where we're not focused on the number of choices for the issue resolutions, but they were focused on ease over choice.

So, you know, I simply wanted a faster resolution without bouncing around channels. So, you know, from starting on, you know, chat, you know, going to email. Yeah. And then, you know, getting a call, they just wanted, you know, one stop. To resolve a dress, you know, and save as much time as they need. So important parties is to prioritize effort over channel choices.

So more, it's not necessarily bigger. And, you know, we all know about, you know, the paradox of choice, where the more choices you have, uh, you know, the more hesitant, you know, the customers become in order to, you know, um, you know, buy something. Alright, uh, step number two, next issue avoidance. So basically I'm sure you know, you all have experienced that and you probably have it somewhere in your view as well, where you ask the customers, if you have fully resolved their issue today.

Well, you know, companies tend to think that, uh, The customer's issues are resolved, their first contact. But when you ask the same question to the customers, only half a person, you know, of only 40% of the response risks, Banderas tend to say that their issue gets resolved in one context, because what you consider a contact is not what the customer considers.

So the customer considers the contact is the visit to the website when they're searching for answers. So their call to your business is, is a contact number too. So anyway, those, you know, those psychological things are very critical because we're talking and about people, your customers, and the way they think is not necessarily the way the business owners, um, you know, perception.

So. And drivers of call back explicit issues, failures versus implicit issues failures. So the explicit issue is failure. That's when the customer calls you and says, Hey, I have this no problem. You know, I want it to be addressed. And you know, whether it gets addressed or not, that's, you know, that's explicit in place.

It is basically. You as the business failing to undertake or realize that there are undercurrent, uh, trans transpire in your business that are the reason for ongoing calls. So, um, if I were to ask you today, do you track the ongoing, um, You know, Kohl's or do you, do you have different types of categories of issues that transpire on ongoing basis?

And if you do not have that, I would encourage you to basically, you know, create a spreadsheet and start tracking these, you know, the, uh, the cold is related to issues or emails, or even just, you know, to. You know, talk, talk to your existing customer base and, you know, ask them, you know, what type of issues they've experienced in, you know, last six months, you know, to, you know, two, a year, or if you were very focused on, you know, what type of issues or what type of perceptions the customers are dealing with right now during the, uh, the uncertain times off, you know, COVID-19, uh, Use your user, you know, client place, your customer base and, you know, reach out to them, you know, with the, with the questions that you know, so you can dissipate, you know, the explicit and implicit issues, you know, and prevent them from transpiring in the future.

Um, experienced engineering. This is a very interesting, you know, I use the, um, you know, I wanted to introduce it to a very simple idea, example where words matter and especially the way they matter is that the, by the way, you interact with customers through the, the words, uh, the, the words, selection, or the choice of words.

Uh, can lead to a decreased perception of the customer efforts. So if your agent, or if your employee, uh, tends to kind of like, you know, be customer advocate, they're taking position over active support on behalf of the customer customer, think that, you know, it decreases the customer's Alfred by almost 77%.

When we use positive language, you know, the terms that prevent negative reactions. Again, you know, it leads to a, the significant, you know, customer effort decreased in anchoring strategically sequencing an option with the range of choices. Um, you know, one of the simplest examples of that I have a right now for you is, you know, let's pretend that, you

know, we are traveling somewhere and the, uh, the ticket agent says that, well, Be, you know, we currently don't have the flights and, um, you know, you need to reschedule.

So, you know, you're coming to the, you know, you come to the agent and, you know, your requests, you know, to, to, you know, to reschedule the flight and, you know, for as fast as you can or as soon as possible. So instead of giving you one option that, you know, may be very inconvenient for you, but at least it's an option.

They start with the possibly the worst option available and saying that, Hey, uh, you know, we can definitely put you on the flight tomorrow at 9:00 AM. However, if you're willing to stick around, I can, you know, see what I can do and possibly put you on the flight and five o'clock. So instead of. Uh, instead of just giving you one option and, you know, creating kind of like, you know, making the negative situation worse, they given you an opportunity to choose out of the, you know, to least desired outcomes, at least, you know, the, the, the better of two, um, again, those advocacy positive language and anchoring R D tactics can be used and they don't cost much, as long as you, uh, you know, spend the pro you know, significant amount of time, you know, Constructing the type of, uh, uh, like capillary or, you know, giving the, the, the, uh, the script is sentences for your, um, you know, employees to understand and know how to properly utilize them in different situations.

And, um, you know, the four pillar of low effort service is the, uh, the front line control. It's basically, you know, the people that you hire, um, There are seven types of, um, you know, there are seven categories of, um, kinda like customer service employees or agents that have been recently developed. And, uh, Matthew Dixon, the author of the effortless experience, um, has an awesome article about that.

Uh, I'll share, I'll share it with you guys in the, uh, the, the resource section up to the presentation. But basically everyone is looking for the empathizer. The person that can empathize with the costumer can be in the shoes of the customer and not simply ultimately find the best way to resolve the issues.

From the customer's point of view, instead of, you know, being the, uh, the kind of like the controller, like, you know, this is how we abide by, and this is how we do the business here, but they also, you know, they're not wanting to be a pushover, like the accommodator who just simply agrees with the customer.

And does, you know, what the customer wants? Um, Again, you know, there's a lot more to, uh, you know, to learn about the, uh, the different types of employees. So everything that you know, we've discussed previously is part of the, um, the service design or designing the, uh, the experience through the service. So me, let me play you this real really quick.

So you know exactly what I'm talking about here. There are a lot of misconceptions about what it is. That's because our definition doesn't mean quite stand up to what we use today. Traditionally goods are a tangible, consumable things like pens while services are intangible and can't be consumed like the postal service or a massage today.

That isn't quite true. There's no clear distinction. Rather everything we make exists on a continuum goods on one side services on another. Designing a service is not the same thing.

As service design designing a service service is us creating that customer journey that end to end of what the user experiences.

Service design is us understanding what we as employees have to do in order to then produce that customer journey. Service design is defined as looking across an organization's resources and designing how it works in order to one improve the employee's experience, and then to indirectly improve the user's experience.

There are three things that comprise service design first being people. Whether they be the users or the employees, maybe even third parties are props. All the things that have to exist in order for the employees to create the experience. These can be tools. They can be physical places. Third are processes.

These are workflows or procedures that occur between employees or between employees and users. My favorite example of service design is thinking about going to the theater. I as the user walk in and I see a lot of things. I see the stage. I see the actors, I see the lights now in order for all of that to exist, there's a lot happening backstage.

There's a director. There's wardrobe changes. There's a whole crew. There's someone that built the set. If we look at our organizations, it's the exact same thing. The user does and sees a lot, but how does that exist? And that should take as much thought and resources as a user's experience itself. Alright, fantastic.

Well, that was an overview of the, the service design and basically everything that we've talked about up to this point was exactly about that. So the key to success in the disservice design, they're basically, you know, just a too simple thing or. They're simple, but they're not easy to execute. So non-judgment that the first one is the understand the customer experience and mastered the experience management.

So you basically have to understand, or you prob you at this point, you should know who your customers are, what type of experience or. Uh, you know, what type of service they receive in their perception of the, the services and the products that you deliver to your customers in the ways that you, you do that and ultimately start elevating the delivery of that experience.

the value and the way the product's being consumed or, um, Purchased from your retail. Is that exactly what the, um, the, the experience management is? So the customer experience is the perception of customers, half of their interactions with an organization. So. We have perceptions and we have expectations.

The traditionally the perceptions, you know, comprise of three categories or three elements, the, basically the success factor, you know, the degree to which customers can achieve their goals, uh, through purchase or the consumption of the goods from you, the effort, how easy it is or hard is for the customer to obtain what they desire from you.

And, um, I, you know, emotions, how easy or hard it is, you know, for, you know, for, for customers to, to, to, to.

To, to, to deal with your business. Sorry. You know, I was just, you know, getting sued, so super excited. So the most important thing in that particular equation is not the completion of a, uh, of a specific action, but the effort and the emotion that it takes in order for them to get to, uh, To, uh, to the desired state.

So, you know, if you think about the, uh, the, you know, attitudes as part of that, uh, the experience cycle, you know, are they going to, you recommend your company? Do they trust the products or services, or, you know, if you're talking about the employees that provide that experience or provide the service to the clients that or customers that come to your place of business, You know, do those people out their job, are they excited about it?

And, uh, or, you know, are they, are the customers going to stay away from the products because you know, whether it was not in the proper condition or it was damaged or it wasn't up to the, uh, To the expectation of the Scott, of the, of the customer. And ultimately that's a human experience cycle, you know, drives the leads to these certain types of behaviors that ultimately, you know, impact the, um, the customer experience.

When we were talking about the customer experience management operating framework, there are three main components that should be considered. You know, technology, what type type of tools or platforms that are being utilized to collect and understand and take action on the combination of experiences and the, uh, how does that platform on your gate operational data competencies absolutely must to be, uh, you know, you have to have training, you have to have.

Procedures and, uh, you know, a certain level off, you know, comprehension of how these things impact, you know, the bottom line. So, you know, the skills in action that establish customer, uh, customer experience management as the discipline inside your business. And I realize that your companies may consume stuff, you know, three to five, or maybe, you know, 50 or a hundred employees.

So regardless of the size of your, our organization, the, um, The customer experience operating framework should be, um, utilized as, or should it be viewed as a discipline and not as a, some kind of like, you know, a short leaf tactic, um, you know, ultimately culture, the mindset then believes that encourage, uh, customer experience management.

Um, At your organization. You know, when we, when we talk about technology competency in cultures, it's like, all right, well, where do we start? Are there any tools that can help with that? Um, first this is my one of my most favorite tools and I've, uh, I presented on the business model canvas, uh, multiple times as the part of the fastforward Maine.

Uh, you know, workshops and for those of you who have not attended those previously, I believe we have recording of that. And, um, we'll share it with the, uh, attendees of today's workshop, uh, later in the, uh, email. But the business model canvas, you know, consists of several critical components, you know, on the right side, at the very top, we have customer segment, customer relationship channels, and the value proposition.

That's basically your front and the way the customer experiences the business. And ultimately, you know, the revenue streams, you know, how do you make the money on the

backend? If you go back to them, the, uh, analogy that, um, Uh, Sarah shared in the, uh, in the video, it's kind of like the, the front stage and the backstage.

That's your theater. That's where the things are happening on a backend before the value can be delivered to the customers. These are the, uh, the key activities that transpired as part of your business, the resources that are required in order for your business to operate and ultimately, you know, the partners.

Who do you work with in order to deliver the service? Is it the, um, you know, the partners can be considered as your, you know, marketing agency. It can be, uh, the person, uh, a specific brand or a distributor that delivers products to you or distributes the products, products on behalf of you and ultimately, you know, what is it costing you?

To deliver the value or the products to your customers. And, um, you know, one of the newest additions to the business model, this is the sustainability and, you know, is the, the business model that you currently have a sustainable and you know why the sustainability of the business model is critical, especially right now, when, um, you know, before COVID a lot of, um, Organizations didn't consider a digital channels as something that, that could add to it, the resiliency of their business, or ultimately, you know, this survival of their business.

But again, you know, uh, COVID-19, you know, it was, uh, surprise to all of us, but, uh, you know, some took the time to, um, you know, utilize it for the, the benefits of their business and, you know, ultimately address the ongoing issue. So. Let's take a look at the, uh, the business model, you know, the quick explanation of what it is and how it works.

Businesses can be described with nine basic building blocks, your customer segments or value proposition for each segment, the channels to reach customers, customer relationships, you establish the revenue streams you generate. The key resources and key activities you acquire to create value and the cost structure of the businesses, but it's not sufficient to just read the books that you really want to do nothing else in a pretty structured campus.

Cool. The business campus helps you in that disperse design invent new business. Let's briefly go through the night billing stunting for the customer savings. These are all the people that organizations, which are creating very simple users and paying customers. Reach set specific value proposition is the bundles of products and services that create value for your customers.

The channels, through which touchpoints you're interacting with customers and delivering customer relationships, outline the type of relationship you establish with the customers. Revenue streams here, how, which pricing mechanisms, your business model is capturing value. Then you need to describe the infrastructure to create, deliver, and capture value. The key resources show, which assets are indispensable in your business activities.

Show which things you really need to be able to show who can help you leverage your business. Since he will talk you as you leave. And once he understands this, this was infrastructure.

So the business model canvas, you can not have read. Tell me at this one, this works just as well as to the senior executives.

All right. And, uh, the next tool that I want you guys to be very familiar with is the, uh, the value proposition canvas. So basically if you look at the business model canvas, the value proposition is something that we just really focus on at the very, very middle of it. Um, it consists of the customer segments and the, the value proposition themselves, the, the customer segments, you know, they have, you know, three specific things, their games, you know, what are the gaining through the consumption of your products or the purchasing, the products?

From you, what are the pains? The product is addressing, or the service that in, in, in the, in the way the product is being delivered to the customers, what are the pains that are being addressed? And ultimately, you know, the customer jobs, you know, why are the, why do they need something from you? You know, it wasn't, it is it, is it, you know, is it a functional, uh, is it, you know, social or is it, uh, Kind of like, you know, the personal needs for the value proposition on the left, your product or your service basically talks, you know, the gain creators pain relievers, and you know, what the product and service itself.

So, um, I know that, you know, we have only a couple of minutes left, so I'll just, you know, play this video that explains the canvas in more details. Every day companies, design products and services to improve their customer's lives. But 72% of new product and service innovations fail to deliver on expectations.

This means that customers don't care about 710 new products introduced to the market. It doesn't have to be this way. Just like you create value for your business. With a business model canvas, there is in fact, a tools, intentionally visualized design, and test how you create value for customers. It's called the value proposition canvas.

The value proposition canvas is composed of two parts, the customer profile and the value map with the customer profile. You describe the jobs, your customers trying to get done. Jobs can be functional, like getting for me to be social, like impressing friends and colleagues. Or emotional, like gaining peace of mind.

You highlight your customer's pains, which had wait. Customers were trying to get a job done paints, a negative outcomes that customers like dissatisfaction in solutions and challenges, frustrations, or obstacles related to perform your job. And you outlined customer gains, which describe our customers to measure the success of the job aides, the positive outcomes that customers hope to achieve concrete results, benefits, and even aspirations.

Use the customer profile to visualize test and track your understandings, the people or companies you intend to create value for. It's a map that becomes clear at the moment about the customers. The second part of the canvas is the value map with it. You list the products and services. Your value proposition builds on you.

Describe in which way these products, services and features are pain relievers, how they eliminate, reduce, or minimize pains, customers care about making their life easier. And you

outline in which way they are gain creators or they produce increase or maximize outcomes and benefits that your customers expect to desire.

I would be surprised by the value of that makes explicit how your products and services relieve pain to create gains, use it to design test and iterate your value proposition until you figure out what resonates with customers. You achieve by creating a clear connection between what matters to customers and how your product services and features, ease pain, create gains, great value propositions, target essential customer jobs, pains, and gains do so extremely well.

Your customer profile may contain countless jobs pay, but it was only Matt primates, which ones you tend to focus on. Don't forget and outstanding value proposition and still fail. If your business model is successful companies embed outstanding value propositions and scalable and profitable business models.

Use the value proposition, canvas to create products and services that customers want get started and strategize, and don't come. Awesome. Uh, perfect. Well, um, you know, we're at the end of these, uh, you know, short, but I hope very exciting presentation. So five things to keep in mind, as you kick start or restart the, the customer experience, uh, you know, program at your business, there are just only five things.

Focused on effort and emotion, uh, you know, not just success, you know, quote unquote, those, uh, you know, the purchases, you know, what does it take and what does the customer feel? Um, You know, after obtaining or, you know, before they obtain, uh, the product, uh, from your business, uh, establish a core relationship metric that tracks a key attitude, meaning, you know, do you want drive sales?

Do you want to drive repeat sales or do you want to utilize your loyal customers or build the loyalty in your customers for the, um, to generate the referral type of, you know, um, business. Start small, uh, you know, within tens focus on driving action, you know, whether it's improving, um, The employee experience that will enable the great customer experience or ultimately, you know, implementing potential, showing new communication channel or a, um, you know, an add on service as part of your product and service offering.

And ultimately, uh, as all, um, change agents or the agents of change, how, uh, is Rachel likes to, uh, to call all those people that, you know, drive change, um, remain positive. Regardless of what's going on regardless of the available resources, I think it's critical to, um, you know, to stay positive drive change and, uh, move forward.

And, um, on that note, I'm, um, I have to say I'm pretty impressed with myself that I actually managed to right on time. I'm clearly not as a, as scripted as Rich's presentation. Rich. Italian person remarkable. I tried, you know, to scripted mine as much as, as much as I could, but my focus goes on the, uh, uh, ending on time.

Um, a couple of one, one more thing that I wanted to leave you guys with, actually not one but three. Um, I'm sure you're going to find it fence, you know, very interesting. Uh, if you have time, of course, the effortless experience, but by Matthew Dixon, Uh, this is an incredible book that, you know, drives, you know, to the heart of what efforts look like, you

know, for customers, um, jobs to be done by, um, Steven wanker, um, basically helps you understand why customers buy.

And, you know, if they buy a product or a service, what is the purpose of the product and service and what they hope to accomplish? And, you know, my new kind of like, you know, daily Bible, uh, you know, for the customer experience nerd and the geek like myself, uh, the invincible company by, uh, or sir Wilder and, uh, Alan Smith basically talks about, um, business model, canvas, and the value canvas value proposition, canvas.

As a way to save guard the future. So I think the combination of those three books, uh, you know, would be an incredible addition to everything that you guys doing with your business. And I, uh, I wish you the best of luck. In, uh, you know, in the new reality of doing business in Maine, then across the globe.

So, and again, thank you for attending today's presentation and stand with me until the end. So thank you. Well, thank you very much. You're a lot to think about it looks like we've got our homework. At least our reading assignments set up for us. So a good to know that, and we can include those books. Uh, if you didn't get a chance to take them down, we'll include those in the wrap up email that we'll be sending out the next couple of days.

And now we're going to actually shift to our third speaker of the day. So again, Yuri, thank you very much for that presentation. Uh, our third speaker, many of, you know, Curtis Bacardi. He joined the retail association of Maine, formerly the Maine merchants association as the president and CEO in November, Amber of 2007 retail association of Maine is a statewide nonprofit trade association representing more than 350 businesses in the state from large chains to small independent retailers.

The retail association main source is the voice of retailers and main and concentrates on preserving the States strong retail climate. Uh, Curtis has previously served on the boards of the Maine tourism association, council of state retail associations, national retail Federation, and inform me, uh, he was appointed by the DEC CD commissioner to the small business and entrepreneurial commission.

Most recently, he was appointed to the governor's economic recovery committee. The committee tasked with developing recommendations to help stabilize retail, tourism, and hospitality as a result of the pandemic. He also serves on board of directors of the Maine state association of executives and the top some development incorporated, which is also where he lives with his, with his wife and son.

Kurt is very excited for your presentation and with that. Okay. I will hand over the controls to you. Thank you rich and thank you both. Uh, you and URI for your presentation this morning, you guys did a great job. Uh, thank you everybody for making time for this, uh, webinar this morning. Uh, and the wonderful introduction as well.

I'm going to get my presentation underway here for you. Um, as rich said, I've been with the retail association of Maine for quite a while now, and I'm sure this works.

There we go. Uh, I've been with the retail association, uh, a number of years now. And without question for like many of you, 2020 has been an incredibly challenging year and that's to put it mildly. Um, from the time that pen, this pandemic started myself and my team. I worked tirelessly to try to support retailers in any way, shape or form that we can.

It was, um, Uh, early on a seven day a week endeavor, uh, every day was drinking like a fire. It was like drinking from a fire hose. We never knew what was going to happen on that particular day. Uh, but in that time period, I think we established ourselves, um, as a, as a reasonable voice, uh, in working with the administration and trying to, uh, make sure that as we navigated something that did not have a playbook.

How to best navigate, uh, getting retailers reopened, uh, defining who was a central, who was not a central, uh, in getting us to where we are right now, which is a very safe environment for people to shop, uh, and hopefully continue to grow their businesses again. But we don't, uh, we don't want to minimize how.

Difficult this year has been for everybody. Um, as rich mentioned, I also serve on the governor's economic recovery committee and have spent a lot of time this summer on the subcommittees and the full committee, uh, trying to help, uh, retailers, uh, hospitality and tourism related businesses recover as best we can.

Um, I'm pleased to say that retail has recovered a little bit better than, uh, tourism and hospitality properties. Um, but we're certainly not out of the woods yet. So in my presentation today will be going to offer some insights into what the holiday shopping season will look like this year. Um, as well as, uh, hopefully some tips that will reinforce some of the things that Rich and URI have shared with you this morning as well.

So without question holiday shopping season is likely to be a season like no other. Um, we're now into September, uh, schools have reopened for the most part, mostly with a hybrid between in person and online types of learning. Uh, my son is a high school sophomore here, uh, in top summit mountain air out high school.

And he's going currently two days a week on Thursdays and Fridays and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesdays are, uh, done remotely, which is what a lot of schools are doing across the state. Um, we're hopeful that schools will continue to stay open, but without question how the schools go could certainly have an impact on the holiday shopping season as well.

If we have to revert to a hundred percent virtual. Uh, shopping again, our snatched shopping the schooling again, uh, it will certainly impact the retail industry because a lot of workers then will no longer be able to work the same schedules, uh, with their kids not being able to go there. So what I'd like to do is start off, um, if you could, in the chat box below, chime in and let me know if you think that this year's holiday shopping season will be better, than last year, worse than last year or about the same.

So go ahead and just pop that into the chat and we'll take a look at that as we're going through.

Some of the research I've done, uh, in preparation for today, um, I pulled through a number of different national reports and, uh, different data that exists out there. And right now, uh, this was a survey that was done about a week ago, right? In the beginning of September, uh, 39% of us holiday shoppers plan.

Plan to spend less on gifts this year, uh, about 45, 49%. Almost half will spend about the same and only 12% are saying that they're planning to spend more on gifts this year, whether or not this will prove to be true. Um, you know, this is one of the things we'll know in January after the holiday shopping season is open how it actually performed, but right now this is what people are anticipating.

And when you dive into it, it's probably not that far of a stretch to think that, uh, unemployment is still up, although it is improving month after month, uh, the economic uncertainty that exists throughout this pandemic and will continue to exist through the fall and possibly into the new year. And it's going to make people more uncertain about how they're going to be spending their money.

Uh, but one of the interesting things we've seen over the summer, is that there are a number of retailers, not just Amazon that have done actually fairly well throughout the pandemic. Uh, and not just grocery stores either. That was. That was a story early on in March and April when people were rushing to get food and essentially hoarding different items, but a lot of retailers that are selling goods and services that market to people doing things outside.

So canoes, kayaks, hiking equipment, a lot of recreational vehicles, those types of businesses that have actually done really, really well. And I think the anticipation is that those folks will continue to do well through the holiday shopping season as well.

So I think the most important message I can share with you this morning is in terms of the holiday shopping season, the best thing to do is to approach it, that you want to try to extend that holiday shopping season as much as possible. So as you see here, a number of people are planning the shop, start their holiday shopping earlier than ever.

Uh, and in our conversations with a lot of multi-state retailers that operate across the country, they too are planning to roll out their holiday shopping promotions earlier than ever as early as October 1st. Um, and the way to do that is to, uh, help spread out the crowds that traditionally happened during the holiday shopping season.

But the other encouraging part about this, uh, this slide that I'm sharing is that. The number of people that plan to shop locally for their gifts. And it's small businesses is a significant driver as well. And that's something we've seen increased significantly over the last couple of years, recognizing that this year is going to be different.

No matter what we do. And what we talk about, there has been a significant trend over the last few years of people, not just saying they support local businesses, they're actually doing it. Uh, so the drive to support our local business owners has been, uh, continuing to increase, not just in Maine, but across the country.

And it has produced measurable, uh, impacts along the way. Uh, the other thing I'll point out here on this, uh, on this, uh, the slide is the bottom one. If a store requires me to wear a mask, I will not shop there. Thankfully, these people are the minority out there. Um, early on, you know, Uh, may into June when, uh, the recommendations to wear masks were, uh, not solidified like they are now, there was a lot of pushback and a lot of concern among retailers of all sizes.

Um, and although I think probably everybody on this webinar has experienced, uh, in ordinary customer or two about mask wearing. At this point, people understand that to get through this as quickly and easily as possible. The recommendation is for people to wear masks when out in public. Um, so while Maine's requirement is specifically for large retailers of 50,000 square feet or more, I continue to see more and more signs, uh, across the state.

Uh, Reemphasizing that if you want to shop in a particular store, you need to wear a mask. Um, so I'm glad to see that that statistic continues to improve over the months.

So Rich talked about the Amazon on factor and going online. Um, and I think one of the things that we're all empty the sizing is how critical it is to be able to make the shopping experience as easy as possible for your customers, regardless of which channel they're choosing. So whether that's online or in store, you have to be ready to meet your customer's needs as they are desiring them.

For better or worse. And I've said this in other presentations I've given retail has always been and always will be both extremely competitive, but also get very innovative in what they do. So the push over the last number of years about the rise of Amazon and more e-commerce and it's one of the things that gets reported on each year as to how much.

Online shopping has increased year over year, uh, that, that whole evolution and technological development really force people, uh, into that this pandemic that may not have planned to move as quickly as they did. So I've said that there's probably been about five years of technological advancement in the last six months, uh, because of the band dynamic.

So for retail. The hardest part about this holiday shopping season is that, uh, everything that you've been taught and they've learned to do over the last couple of years, whether it's black Friday or small business Saturday, the early bird sales, the doorbusters, midnight madness, other fairs and festivals, everything retail has always done is to drive crowds into your store.

And now with the pandemic, we have to totally up in that and think about things completely differently. Small business Saturday has really grown over the years to become a thing of its own, not quite on par with black Friday, but it has shown to be a and efficient driver of people. And to locally owned stores, uh, early bird sales often happened in November is a way to extend the holiday shopping season.

And as I said earlier, the push is going to be. To make sure your customers understand that the holiday season essentially starts now and you need to start marketing, getting to them sooner rather than later. Um, and aside from things like Christmas, I mean, we have to think

about Thanksgiving as well, whether or not you and your family are going to continue to celebrate in the same way that you have in the past, uh, is a real question for people, for my family.

We haven't quite figured it out yet. We don't usually have a huge Thanksgiving gathering, but usually my sister and brother in law come up from Massachusetts. And although you can't tell from my name, you'd probably think with my last name of Picard, I'm. I'm French Canadian, but actually my mom's family is all Italian and our Thanksgiving holidays were already celebrated with a lot of Italian food and there's a, uh, Italian pastry shop near the town where I grew up in that always had the canola that we liked.

So even though my sister comes up here now to, for Thanksgiving, she'll go that morning by the cannoli and drive it up here to Maine so we can have it. If she's not coming this year, that's one of the holiday traditions that we may lose out on. But I would hope that that pastry shop would have the ability to ship us those things overnight.

And so it was a locally owned business. Those are the things you need to think about and plan for. So the big question is in what numbers will customers return in store this year? Um, you know, there will be an increase in online shopping without question, but also because people aren't going to be traveling as much, you're more likely to be gaining customers that are based, uh, in your geographic area than ever before.

Um, well, the, well, the eCommerce orders and demand for curbside and in store pickup remain high and increased further still. We think they will. And this will be particularly impacted as to what happens with schools. Uh, like I said, if schools have to revert to virtual learning completely, um, you're going to have to see stores, uh, increase their opportunities for curbside pickup as well.

And one thing that hasn't been mentioned by Richard jury is that, um, although it's not as widespread as it was early on in March and April, there still are some supply chain disruptions. Um, and part of that is multiple factors. Part of it is a lot of manufacturing facilities or raw materials were shut down in the early days of the pandemic and they haven't caught up yet with the demand that's out there.

Um, and so what we're hearing from a lot of retailers is that, um, it might be better to take. The Martins mentality of buying it when you saw it in the store, because there very well could be limited numbers of certain items, more popular items. And so, um, we're advising folks that if you see an item, um, and it's in stock right now, go ahead and get it because it may not be in stock, uh, later on in the season.

So planning ahead is definitely key this year. So let's dive in a little bit different in terms of customers in store. Maine right now, uh, has a limit on the number of customers in store to a factor of five per thousand square feet. Um, this was attacked. Maine took, I think back in June when, uh, the, the retail reopening plan and guidelines were rolled out.

It enabled, um, an increase from the previous limits, which, um, were really restrictive to a lot of folks. Um, and you know, we were told was not economically viable for the long term. Uh, so once we were able, once the retail industry was able to develop a track record of

making sure people were staying safe, the customers were staying safe and employees were staying safe.

We were able to increase that limit to five per thousand square feet. But going into the holiday shopping season, we have some real questions as to whether or not that 5%, some square feet, uh, uh, limit is still going to be viable and workable. Uh, we've been starting to hear from retailers across state, in August, as things were starting to pick up economically that they were starting to bump up against that customer limit with much more frequency, especially on the weekends.

So. I don't have a firm answer yet on as to what the perfect number should be. Um, I am very proud that retail as a whole, um, has done a really excellent job of keeping people safe. You haven't heard of widespread outbreaks happening at major retailers or from local retailers in terms of community spread.

I think everybody on the webinar's aware of where those pockets of, um, The virus exists currently in Maine. Some of them have been tied to that wedding up in Millinocket, as well as the current outbreak going on in Sanford. But, um, you know, for the most part, uh, retail has done a very good job of protecting customers and, uh, their employees as well.

So as we go into the holiday shopping season, we're going to be talking with the administration soon about whether or not that five per thousand square foot limit. Should be increased. I don't have a magic number of what it should be. I don't know if it should be seven per thousand or 10 per thousand or 15 per thousand.

One of the things that would be really helpful to hear from folks on the webinar today is to get a sense of how many people you actually have in your store during your peak moments, through the typical holiday shopping season. Whether that's black Friday, small business Saturday, uh, the weekend before Christmas is also very popular with a lot of shop hurts.

Um, and to get a better sense of where that limit typically is will enable us to go back to the administration with some data and say, look, we understand the limit is currently five per thousand square feet, but in a typical year, retailers, these types of retailers usually see 15 per thousand square feet or something like that.

Um, In our conversations with the administration thus far, uh, they're open to trying to make the holiday shopping season as workable as possible. Um, in preliminary conversations, we've talked about how to spread out the peaks and valleys, um, and what retailers are gonna do to try to spread out crowds during the week to maybe lesser busy times of say a Monday night or Tuesday night, as opposed to a Saturday and Sunday, you know, anything that's going to help.

Mitigate crowds and keep people safe, uh, pull, probably be welcomed by the administration.

One of the things I've found, um, really interesting and I'm hearing more and more conversation about this this year is, um, you know, and folks may have seen it if you have

Amazon or Amazon prime, uh, you've seen a real, uh, A delay or lessening in next day, shipping or two day shipping, uh, shipping without question has increased significantly.

I think it's important to recognize that shipping delays, uh, do occur and are, I think will continue to increase. And so this is an area where I think locally owned main base retailers can actually compete a little bit better. Um, we're supposed to the online behemoths like Amazon. So recognizing what you're shipping times are like and where the delays may occur.

Um, we've seen the news stories about the U S postal services and the cutbacks and challenges that exist there. A holiday 2020, it could very well prove to be a real challenge for shipping products to people in time for the holidays. And that goes back to the customer service experience that Yuri was talking about.

Um, and we're also hearing that some shippers are going to start considering certain surcharges, um, for certain types of deliveries, whether it's next day or within a, uh, after a certain date I, um, an order is made. So once again, this is an area where we think that locally owned, uh, brick and mortar retailers will be able to compete, uh, with some of our larger online retailers.

But without question being adaptable is going to be paramount to a good customer service experience and getting through the holiday season, um, in a, in a viable way. Um, as rich said, optimizing your eCommerce and trust, cross channel customer experience is going to be key. Um, supply chain and inventory management is going to require vigilance.

We know that most retailers usually commit to their holiday shopping inventory levels, uh, in the summer, right at the peak of the pandemic, uh, and given what we knew then, uh, it's not a stretch to think that. A lot of retailers were very conservative in what they were going to be ordering for the holiday shopping season.

Uh, we've seen an uptick, uh, in, uh, imports from overseas over the last three to four weeks, um, which is boating well, uh, other customer, um, surveys that have been out there have shown that there is a certain level of pent up demand. Because of the band dynamic, um, and their customers have put off a lot of traditional purchases in clothing and other things, but they can only do that for so long.

Um, so while I think everybody is a little uncertain as to how the holiday shopping season will turn out, I honestly won't be surprised if we do as well, or maybe even a little bit better than last year. Um, but there's still so much uncertainty there as well. Um, and as you already said, enrich as well, you know, elevating your marketing strategy is going to be key and there's a lot of different ways to do that.

Uh, making that, um, direct connection with our customers. Making sure your customers know who you are, what you stand for, where your products are from, uh, making sure your store hours are communicated well to folks are all some of the key marketing things, um, that will help make for a successful holiday season.

So let's dive in a little bit more and this will help emphasize some of the things that rich talked about this morning for optimizing e-commerce and cross channel experiences.

Shoppers value, speed and efficiency, especially in efficient checkout process. Um, and for better or worse, the larger retailers, the online retailers kind of set the pace and the customer expectations for this.

So customers, whether you're, um, or I shouldn't say retailers, whether you're bigger, small, uh, have to understand that they need to provide an efficient checkout process for your customers. That's in line with a lot of the bigger folks as well. Cause that's where the customer expectations are. And make sure your website is mobile.

Ready? It should be second nature at this point, but I continued to see small retailers that did not have mobile friendly experiences, uh, on their website. Um, regardless of where you are located, a customer is more likely to look at your website before setting foot in your store than ever before. And making sure it's, um, mobile resistant, our mobile ready is, uh, is key.

And providing a clear and visible access to the shopping cart from each page as you're going through. Um, as you're going through the, um, the website. And I apologize for getting a little distracted. My dog is now in the background, uh, asking to go outside. So, uh, bear with me for a second. Um, Provide a visible access to the shopping cart from each page is critical.

Um, making sure that customers are doing things in an efficient way is without question important, um, and allowing customers to easily add and remove items. I think we can all put on our consumer hat and understand the difficulty sometimes of, uh, different shopping carts that you've encountered. Whether or not, you've already ordered that item.

Um, and you're uncertain and you click it again and then you go to the checkout page to find that you've already added it twice. Um, make it as easy as possible to add and remove items. Okay. And I've also been to a lot of websites and you all have as well, that kind of force you to create an account, to be able to check out of an item.

Um, you know, a lot of times I've seen a product advertised on Facebook. I'm a local retailer decided I wanted to buy it, uh, go to the website, click through, go to the website and then find they want me to sign up for yet another account, enter my email, enter my personal information. Uh, and I really don't want to, I know as a consumer, it's going to be a onetime purchase, uh, as a retailer, you're hopeful that I'm going to come back, uh, again, and maybe I will, or maybe I won't, but don't force account creation.

If you don't have to. And as Richard said earlier, uh, showcasing exactly what your return policy is, is good business at this point. Um, whether or not they're going to buy in your store, pick up at the curb side, or you're going to ship to them directly at home. Uh, having customers know what your return policy is, is key.

Uh, retailers have changed the return policies fairly dramatically, uh, over the years. So it's not a typical 30 day or 60 day return policy for everybody. And it's important to read the fine print. A lot of customers are sometimes surprised from the online only retailers that have less than accommodating return policies and local retailers.

Having more generous return policies can be a benefit. As we've said before, make the checkout as easy as possible, minimize the number of form fields that people have to fill out. There's nothing worse than having to go through multiple pages of adding a ton of information, um, to get to the final checkout process and even things like making sure the right keyboard is available for each field.

So if I'm entering my credit card number or entering my zip code from a mobile device to check out of an item, make sure just the numerical. Number keyboard is showing up and not the overall keyboard as well. Those are time savers and small, subtle things that people will really appreciate. Okay. And then I want to get into Bob's office and, you know, we've used a couple acronyms today from the different speakers, uh, and maybe people are, or aren't familiar with what bapa stands for, but bapa stands for buy online and pick up in store.

Um, so you said before, a lot of retailers were forced into learning how to do curbside delivery. Uh, very early on in the pan down or something retailers were allowed, non-essential retailers were allowed to reopen. So you have a little bit of experience in it, but without question, it's continuing to grow insignificant, um, over the previous years, but certainly he got supersized through the pandemic.

So to give you some hard data behind it nationally, there was 62% year over year increase in, buy online and pick up in store in March, which is really when the pandemic hit. And this holiday season, it's going to be inevitable. That last minute shopping is going to be perfect for this type of shopping environment.

Uh, and especially in Maine, one of the things that I always get asked from the media about how the holiday shopping season is going to go, and I give them our forecast and insights about what people are going to buy. I always caution that by understanding that, um, you know, the weather can, can significantly impact things as well.

And I forget what year it was. I think it was maybe. 2008 or nine, there was a pretty significant ice storm, uh, in Maine, not, not the big thing guys storm from years ago, but there was another one that hit right before Christmas and knocked out that last weekend before Christmas, which as I said before, can often be.

Busier than black Friday weekend. And at that point you're so close to the Christmas holiday that you completely lost those sales, but if you have efficient curbside pickup, you know, buy online pickup in store operations that can accommodate bad weather if, and when it happens, that will be important as well.

So, um, a couple other things that will help make, uh, buy online and pick up in store. Uh, helpful, make it convenient for folks to make sure customers aren't guessing what they have to do to make it happen. Um, if you have, yeah. Have a typical returns counter and as we get closer to Christmas and after Christmas, that's when you're going to face your peak returns, but make sure you're not doing returns and.

Buy online and pickup in store curbside pickup at the same place, there's nothing worse. Then going on, buying an item, you've arranged for the customer to pick it up. The customer

shows up at the store to pick it up and they will walk in and they have to stand in the same line where you're doing returns and they're seeing four or five people in front of them.

It's going to be a huge disincentives. Um, also, if you can. Don't make customers walk to the back of the store to pick up their items. You may be thinking that, Oh, it's be a great way to get people to walk through. Maybe they'll make an impulse buy, but you also have to remember that. It's just another thing that customers will have to do.

And we'll bake it a little bit more of a challenge.

Um, and so, uh, what we recommend is if you can make sure you create a special line or prioritize a line for pick up on store customers, uh, it'll make it much easier for them. Um, and then also if you can have a dedicated phone line for curbside pickup as well, uh, and make sure that phone gets answered and doesn't always go to voicemail or be busy, um, because we have encountered that not only with retailers, but with restaurants as well.

Um, if you'll, excuse me, one second here. I'm going to jump off really quickly. Let my dog out. Hold on.

I think we've all been there. In fact, Curtis and I were joking before he came on, today's presentation about the fact that this sometimes happens in and look, there we go. One of the challenges of working in a pandemic these days. Right. Uh, okay. So I appreciate everybody's, uh, flexibility with that. All right.

So moving on. Uh, customers right now are most likely to use buy online pickup in store. Again, if their turnaround time is less than two hours now that's not feasible for every retailer, but I think it's important to understand what the metric is out there that customers are kind of expecting. So make sure your system and the employees that you have are well trained to be able to try to fulfill those hours as quickly as possible.

So employees have to find the item. Process the order and alert the customer when it's ready as well. And on the customer side, like Rich was talking about, make sure you're sending a triggered email or a text message with detailed pickup instructions and reinforce the pickup time. However, you'd set that up for your, uh, for your business as well.

And so I'm going to stop there. Um, I would really appreciate any kind of questions. Uh, I, myself Rich and Harry are all happy to answer them. Um, but I want to thank everybody for taking time this morning to spend with us, uh, where we're. Continuing to work hard, uh, to represent retailers of all sizes with the administration.

As we continue to navigate the band dynamic and get through it successfully, um, we're taking it step step by step, month by month. Um, and we want to make sure that everybody gets through this, uh, safely and hopefully economically viable into 2021. So thanks.