
How Should Retailers Read the Mixed Reopening Messages?

BY Rich Kizer & Georganne Bender

Reopening guidelines for states, communities, and sometimes towns right next to one another have different rules.

Advice from consultants is all over the place. One suggested retailers remove all merchandise from the sales floor and set up a show room featuring a sample of each item instead. We wondered if this particular consultant had ever stepped foot in an actual stock room? But there are definitely changes to be made as retailers prepare to reopen:

❑ **Check state and county/community guidelines**

continuously because they update frequently. Heavy fines may arrive for social distancing violations.

❑ **Ready your team.** Determine who is coming back and who isn't, then schedule training on how business will be conducted before you re-open your doors. Everyone needs to understand their role and what is expected with new health and safety rules.

❑ **Prepare a WRITTEN plan to share** with associates and customers on how you will care for their health and safety. Provide associates with the PPE needed to do their jobs. Think masks, rubber gloves, hand sanitizers, wipes, etc. and be ready to replace and replenish these items as needed. Consider making paper masks available to shoppers who don't bring their own. Determine to what degree social distancing can be done while shopping in your store. Best Buy has implemented a plan to open by appointment.

❑ **Set your sales floor to sell.** Customers build perceptions in 10 seconds or less upon entering a store—good or bad these perceptions stick; retailers cannot afford to stumble here. Change product on the front display fixtures weekly—yes, even while the store is closed. Change those displays again just before you reopen for business. Pay special attention to your front power walls and merchandise outposts, and cross-merchandise everywhere you can.

Reopening a store after the COVID-19 forced shutdown is similar to your first grand opening, but with a lot more rules. Take your time and get it right. You don't have to reopen the second your state says it's okay, but when you do be ready to serve your customers safely in new and different ways.

If you're looking for more information to guide you in owning a retail business, subscribe to *American Quilt Retailer* today. Already a subscriber? Join our Facebook group for insights and dialogue from industry specialists like you.



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Kizer & Bender are experts on generational diversity, store design, visual merchandising, marketing and promotion, and everything retail.