

# 5 Ways to Make Your Store **VISIBLE** During the COVID-19 Shutdown

BY Rich Kizer & Georganne Bender

If we have learned anything during the COVID-19 shutdown it's that you must work hard to stay in front of customers. Just because your brick and mortar store is closed, it doesn't mean that you can wait it out. Just the opposite. Now is the time to get in your customers faces and stay there. Here's how:

**1. Build a team of associates who are well-versed in what you sell, and can be personable even behind a mask.** Your front line truly is your bottom line. You need associates who understand what they sell and can easily answer every question customers ask about product and product use. Associate training now has another layer as state and community health and safety guidelines must be met, as well as, continuous product and service training. Each morning gather your team and discuss what's important that particular day. Create your own training videos and ask vendors about product training classes your team can take online. You can have the best product at the best prices but it's never going to sell itself. Invest in training your people.

**2. Bundle.** Put together kits or groupings of related product, give each theme a cool name, package it in a fun box, and sell it for one price. \$50 or less makes it easy to grab and go.

**3. Set your sales floor to sell.** It's easy to forgo that basics when you are busy sanitizing the cash wrap 400 times a day, but merchandising isn't something you can let slide. Each day make sure that your speed bump displays are full and cross-merchandised, that your end features tell a story, the fixtures in your lake front property are used to display that's new and

on trend, and the impulse items at the cash wrap are refreshed often. Shoppers who visit your store are in the mood to buy; make sure your displays encourage them to pause.



*My To-Do List*

**4. Work your social networks.** If you are not yet selling online and on social media, start now. Many retailers are reporting stronger sales online while their stores are closed than what they do on a typical day when the physical store is open. Mimic QVC and host a weekly Facebook Live shopping night that's geared to sell product. Add additional broadcasts to share quilting techniques and project demos. If you are new to selling online it's easy to get started with companies like Shopify, Big Commerce and Ecwid.

**5. Be consistent in your marketing.** Your marketing needs to be seen by customers at least seven times before it registers; the more they see your messages the better chance you'll have to capture their attention and their business. Now is not the time to disappear, it's time to get busy.

Before this all started it was okay to send Email blasts to customers every 10–15 days, but with the COVID-19 shutdown you want to send one each week. Each email should have one clear message that's illustrated with photos—big photos—and less copy. Link each photo to a page on your website or social media post so shoppers can click for a closer look at that particular product. It should take the reader 20 seconds or less to understand your message—every email blast you send should encourage the customer to make a purchase online ASAP.

Standing out while your store is closed takes focus, consistency, and a lot of elbow grease. Your challenge after COVID-19 will be dealing with the need to continue to sell online while reopening your physical space for business. As much as you'd like, you cannot back off of online selling—you have to have two stores now.

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.



Rich Kizer and Georganne Bender are consumer anthropologists, speakers, authors and consultants. A team since 1990, Kizer & Bender ([kizerandbender.com](http://kizerandbender.com)) have helped thousands of companies in the service, travel, hospitality, funeral, restaurant, and retail industries grow their business. Kizer & Bender are experts on generational diversity, store design, visual merchandising, marketing and promotion, and everything retail.

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