



# Retail Service Leadership Exchange Forum

## Virtual Meeting & Survey #5: Themes & Takeaways

### Dealing with transformational change

- COVID-19 has forced change at a transformational level, all in the midst of limited and conflicting information and guidance.
- Essential retailers learned through trial and error on a customer-facing stage and are now ahead of the curve while preparing for the next spike/adjusting policies for incremental change.
- Some essential businesses with a purpose-driven culture moved through transformational change rapidly and due to their pride in service and their desire to contribute to the solution, despite front-line associates being at the most risk.
- As non-essential businesses open, they're now experiencing this rapid transformational change.

### Serving customers

- Customer service levels have actually improved through more individual attention to customer needs.
- A big challenge for retailers with pride in service culture is telling customers what they can and cannot do (wear masks, keep 6 feet apart) vs. just inviting them in to shop.

### Onboarding & training

- Remote learning and onboarding using personal devices has been effective and no longer the barrier it was once perceived to be.
- Layering on additional remote learning, such as compliance training.
- As programs are refined, onboarding practices will potentially evolve into a hybrid of remote learning and some on-site application.

### Getting back to work

- Who goes back to working in HQ and under what circumstances remains in flux.
- Numerous factors to consider: business necessity, employee comfort in returning, employee social safety practices, etc.
- Increase in formal HQ scheduling to allow for more social distancing and work space changes.
- Moving beyond testing to contact tracing/isolation for infected associates if necessary.
- Not always clear who is responsible for ensuring compliance of new guidelines.
- Bringing team members back to work creates new Associate Relations/HR challenges with verifying who has been practicing safe social distancing and practices as well as who wants to come back to work.
- Some retailers are focused on encouraging associates to be responsible to self-assess and correct instead of assigning HR or Shared Services.

### Crisis reveals not defines good leadership.

Strong leadership that builds trust has helped field and HQ teams feel more connected and provided stability during this pandemic.

