

Personalizing Your Customer Journey As Retail Returns



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There are so many elements that go into a successful retail organization, and coronavirus has found a way to monkey with nearly all of them. Supply chains are disrupted, products are sold out, or not selling at all. Store hours and store traffic are restricted, and fulfilment, delivery, returns and pricing seems to change on a momentary basis. And as consumers turn to digital channels to shop and to communicate, there are even more issues and unknowns to navigate around new mobile app users, online payments and personalized offers and messaging.

Yet, retailers are also pushing forward, trying to think about how to save money now while maximizing opportunities as the world reopens for business. Ultimately, retailers will be feeling the pressure to make up for lost sales in Q4.

Digital communication like email, social media, SMS and mobile apps can offer a lifeline between retailers and their customers during this time. Research from the Relevancy Group

and Liveclicker shows that retailers that employ advanced personalization earn \$20 ROI. Personalization is an essential strategy for ensuring relevant and meaningful communication with customers. This guide will help you make the most of digital communication; save time, increase scale, and give your customers personalized attention while doing it.



The new normal is not normal

Amazon Prime Day is postponed. Walmart has limited stores to five customers per one thousand square feet. Patagonia has closed completely, while REI is already talking about slowly reopening in the coming months. Every retailer is dealing with some shared and many very different issues right now. Getting back to normal is an unknown, but paving a smooth road to help customers get there with you is within your grasp.

Now is the time to start thinking about the rest of 2020. Breaking it up into three quarters, retailers can think about three different approaches for customers:

Q2

Careful and helpful communication: Showing customers that you're still there for them, and that you're a safe and reliable retail brand is key as customers slowly start coming back to stores and work out their employment situations. While many brands will be primarily focused on moving inventory, customers are still focused on their safety. Customers will want to hear about

- Curbside pickup and store hours changes
- Clean stores and safe shopping options
- Low prices and sales
- Delivery dates and return windows
- Information about community service and other pandemic-related news. (For example, Reformation is making masks for LA, while Vans has a campaign to help small businesses.)



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Q3

Amazon Prime day has been pushed back to mid-August, which will shift the way Q3 has historically performed. Some retailers will have decreased their buys and inventory when COVID hit so they can save on cash flow, which could create a challenge with typical clearance sales. These logistical challenges also need to be combined with Q4 planning and messaging to make up for losses earlier in the year.

- Create offers and offer experiences within targeted groups ahead of holiday as well as focusing on health and safety.
- Refine new customer communication touchpoints, such as curbside pick up post-purchase journeys.

Q4

Ready for action: By looking ahead throughout the rest of the year, savvy retailers will be ready with timely messaging, relevant pricing and an agile approach that will work for any number of purchase and fulfillment options should social distancing re-emerge.

- More online and mobile shopping than last year
- More fulfillment options like curbside pickup
- Well communicated delivery and return windows
- Agility in case of additional or new social distancing



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Communicating with confidence

Now isn't the time to simply repurpose creative from Q1 and hit "send." Customers are different, we're all different. People are dealing with smaller budgets and employment unknowns. They're concerned for their safety and health, and they want to know that the brands they shop with are doing what's best for their community. To build a good communication strategy, keep in mind these new best practices:

Show you care about your employees:

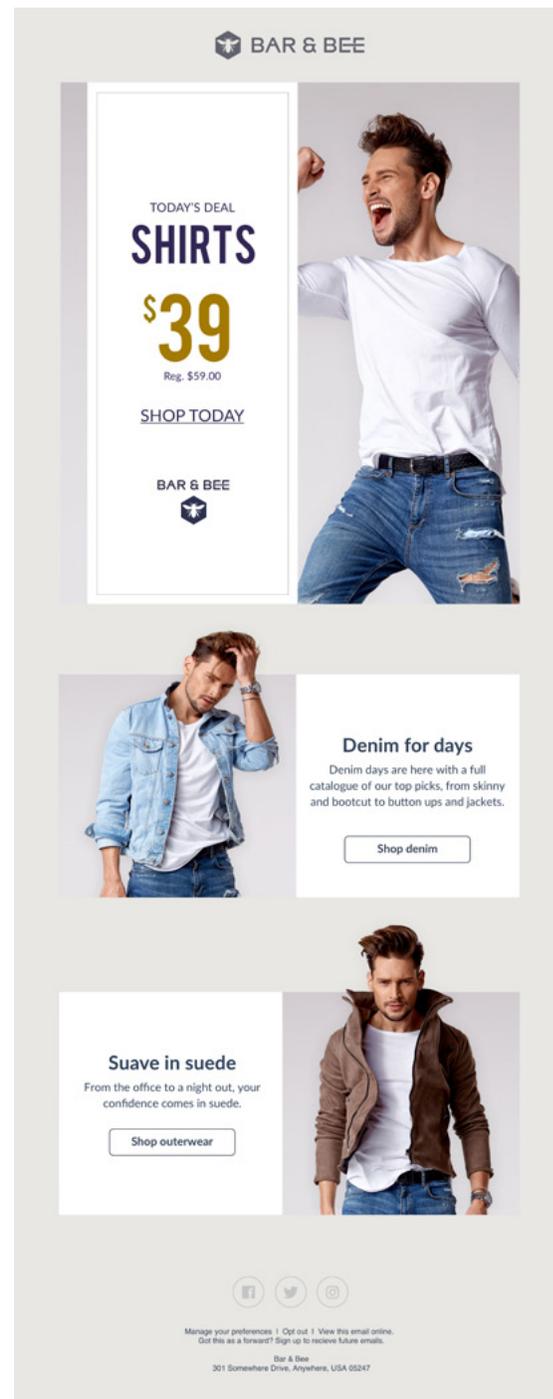
Shoppers will be more discerning about where, how and when they spend their money. As shoppers, we now care how our dollar affects the working conditions of the employees that retailers employ. Shoppers will want to make sure that the employees are treated well, have safe working conditions, paid leave, etc. Be sure to communicate your approach proactively.

- Flower delivery business The Bouqs sent their customers an email that not only explained how their own employees were working remotely, but also how they're communicating regularly with their farmer partners. They also noted that they have an ongoing 25% discount for all healthcare workers during the crisis, which they are promoting in their #1000thankyou campaign.

Focus on what really matters:

Everyone has had a chance to rethink their priorities. Some very dramatically, dealing with health or employment problems. Others have realized that family and free time matter more than outward success. It's important to understand how each customer responds to messaging before making a misstep by testing, testing, testing.

- Madewell sent newsletters that combine retail and messaging. The email focuses on taking care of yourself at home, with comfortable clothes and healthy beauty products. It also opens with an honest appeal to the fact that we're all figuring out what the new normal is, and a promise to do as best as possible as things progress.



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Plan for new interests to stick around:

People who used to care about hair color and make-up might want to go natural. New products like bread makers and puzzles might stay in demand as people stick with the hobbies they took up while stuck at home. Take a look at changes to search and shopping data as Q4 nears.

- Alo Yoga sent an email that encourages customers to join the yoga community on social channels. With people working out at home, this kind of engaging messaging helps increase loyalty with new customers that decide to keep their new exercise program going.

Remind people of new options:

A lot of retailers have seen thousands of new app users, more people selecting curbside pickup, new loyalty members, and so on. These new habits that have formed should be built on, not forgotten. Build email series to keep new converts engaged even as the world changes around us.

- Outback Steakhouse sent an email promotion that reminds customers of their curbside pickup options as well as an offer for free delivery through April 30. Based on the popularity of this kind of offer, it's possible that many companies extend them to keep customers coming back.

Get started with personalized messaging

There are thousands of ways our clients personalize messaging with their customers every day. With many retailers running with a dramatically reduced staff, personalization can also save valuable manual work by automating and scaling messaging. Save time, increase scale and stay in touch:

- ✦ Send email content that you can edit even after you press send: A lot can change from day to day; a store open one day might be closed the next, or a free shipping threshold might change in the course of a few hours.
- ✦ Show up-to-date shipping status on your shipping confirmation emails, each time it's opened, which can help with cost savings to customer service operating expenses. For an even better customer experience, add a banner that displays messages explaining shipping delays/changes. **Figure 1**
- ✦ Offer real-time product recommendations: Products can fly off the shelves fast in turbulent times, and supply chain uncertainty means shipments may not come in as regularly as before. Avoid promoting unavailable products online or in-store with adaptive product recommendations that change based on real-time inventory data.
- ✦ Show fresh loyalty information: Keep your loyalty members warmed up and engaged with highly-personalized messages featuring individualized memberships/rewards data. Give them a reason to keep converting online now, and keep them primed to come back to stores when things return to a semblance of 'normal'. **Figure 2**
- ✦ Send engaging transactional emails: Upgrade triggered/ transactional emails, especially for ecommerce account welcome, order confirmation, and abandoned cart emails with personalized recommendations based on browsing history, live tracking data, and personalized coupons.
- ✦ Add workflow efficiencies: use product scrapes to keep content fresh without using significant resources, and use targeting to serve the right content to the right person without having to create many variations of the same email. **Figure 3**

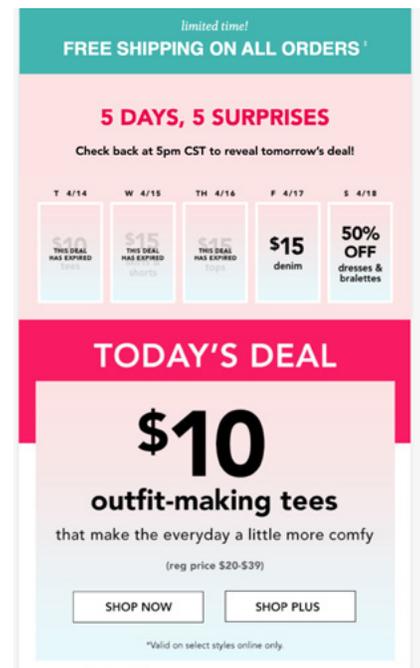


Figure 1

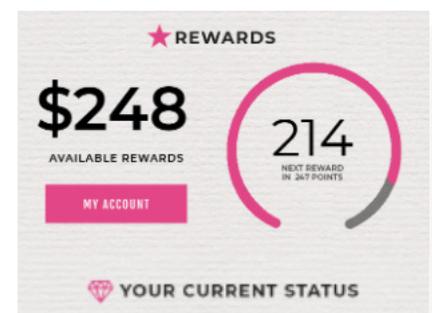


Figure 2



Figure 3

- ✦ Manage templates seamlessly: Use content that can change in real-time to quickly update creative without having to touch the template, even post-send.

- ✦ Display the most current messaging from your social channels: Easily include your brand’s social feed from Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Spotify, Twitter and YouTube.

Figure 4

- ✦ Deliver a relevant video message to your customers: Add a personal touch with an embedded video communicating important information from your brand.

- ✦ Point Customers in the right direction of open stores using geo-targeted maps. This communication can save a trip and potentially avoid a negative customer experience from now through Holiday. **Figure 5**

In the whirlwind days behind us and in front of us, retail marketers will often be overwhelmed with simple logistics as store hours change, supply chains fall apart, and customers dramatically shift their product demands and their shopping behaviors. For any brands that can shore up their digital marketing approach to deliver relevant, personalized messaging, they will reap fast rewards with higher conversion. What’s more, as customers’ lives return to normal, retail brands will have the pieces in place to have a robust online business for years to come.

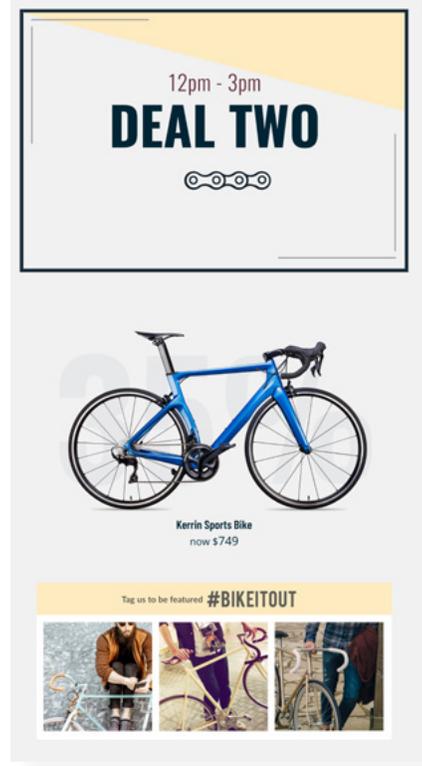
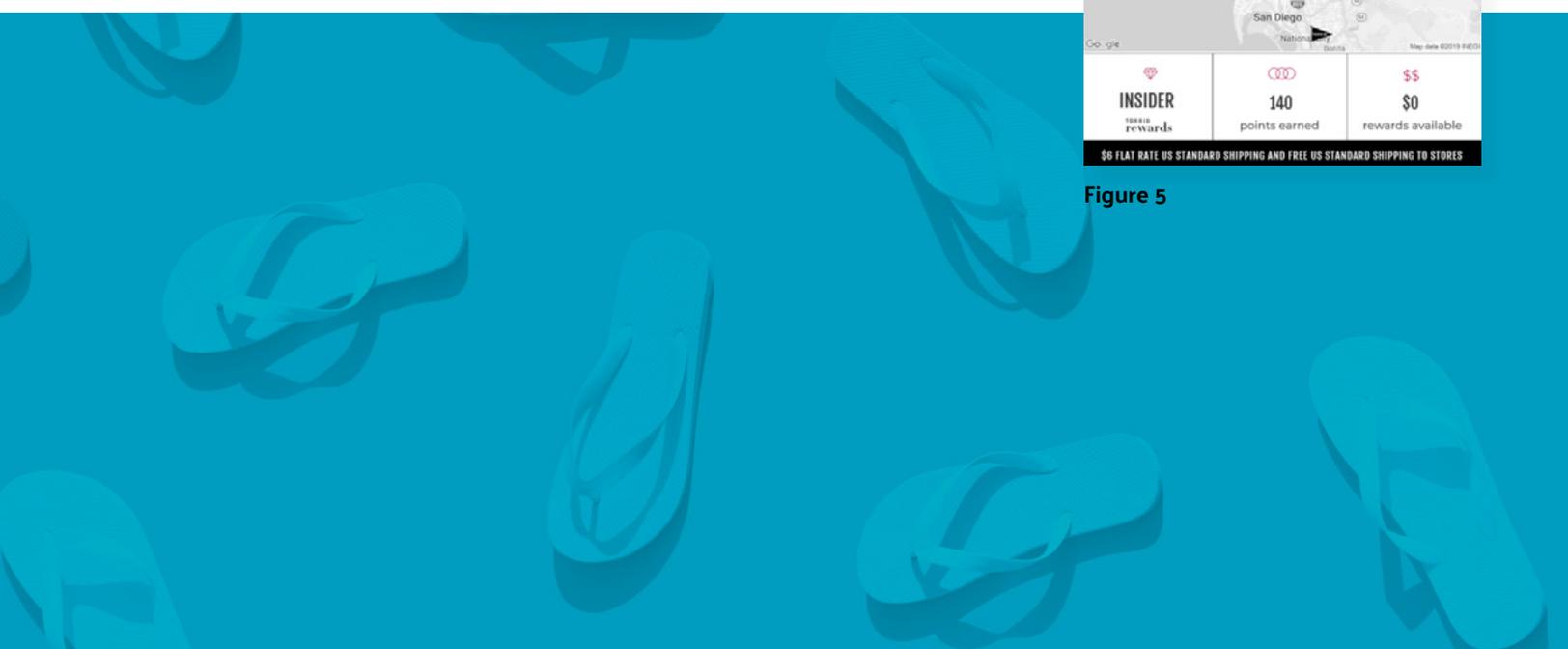
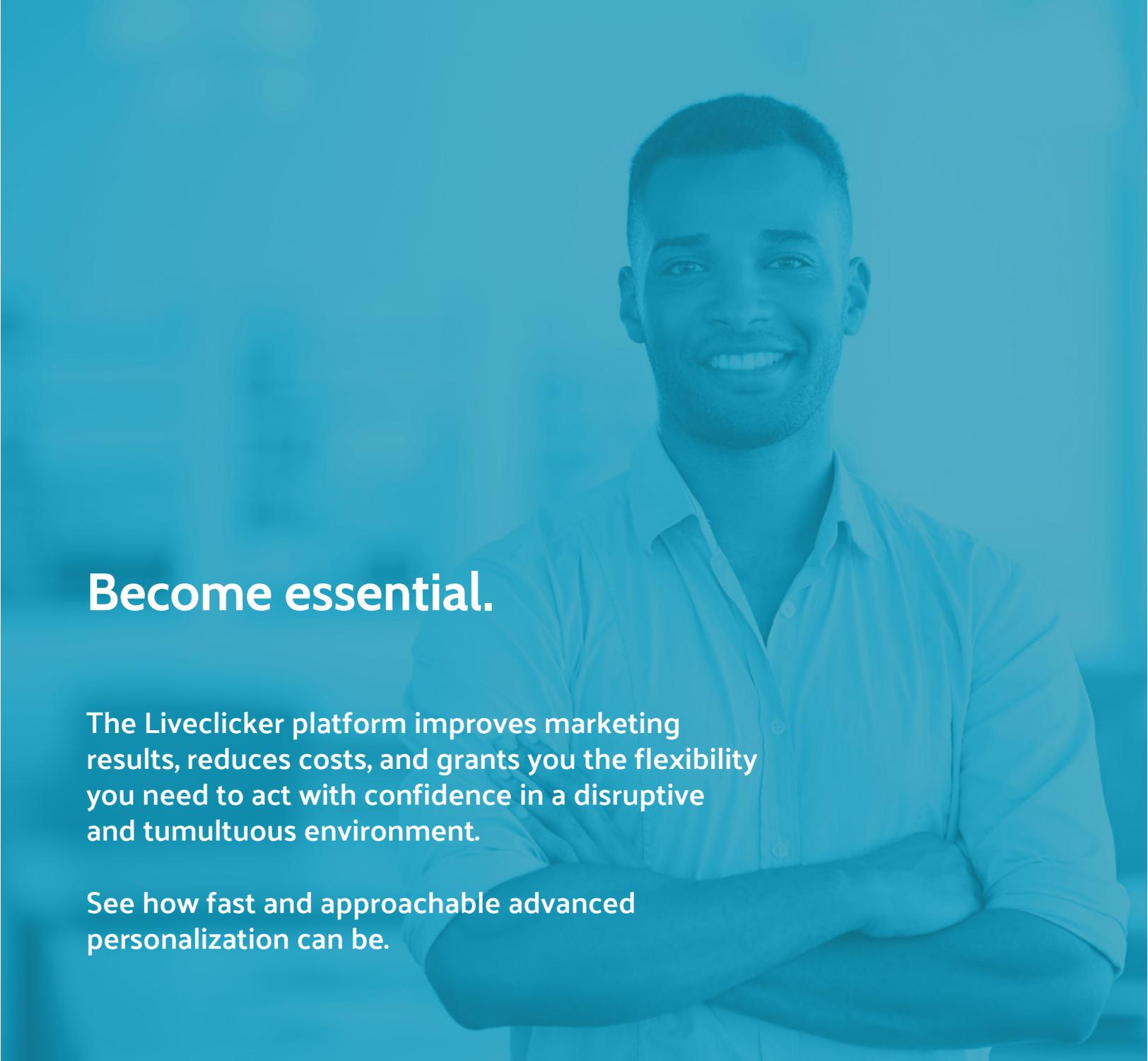


Figure 4



Figure 5





Become essential.

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See how fast and approachable advanced personalization can be.

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