



STAFFING FOR SEASONAL TRENDS IN RETAIL



INTRODUCTION

Today's consumers are still shopping with their favorite retailers, but they're now doing so from the comfort of their own homes. E-commerce continues to extend its hot streak after years of increased adoption and sales activity.

Statewide lockdowns, store closures and safety concerns have often kept consumers from shopping in stores in recent months. As a result, many retailers launched curbside pickup as a way to get products to consumers safely.

As people are increasingly working remotely and attending school from home, new shopping patterns have emerged. Many retailers have been affected by their inability to predict and meet consumer demand for their products. As consumer habits continue to evolve, they must analyze their current operations so that they can stay on top of changing trends.

As the demand for online shopping grows, retailers will likely look to convert their brick-and-mortar locations into online fulfillment centers. E-commerce warehouses are appearing in new locations across the country, either created within existing stores or in adjacent retail spaces. Brick-and-mortar stores can sell products online and have the products ship from the retailer's warehouses. Many retailers are now using their physical locations as distribution centers to reduce delivery times—one of the retail trends bound to define the sector in the future.

E-commerce is no longer seasonal; it is a year-round priority for retailers. But there are certain times of the year where retailers need to focus their attention even more.

In this e-book, you'll read about some of the peak periods that retailers need to consider when creating a staffing strategy.

When including all the jobs in fulfillment, delivery and related roles, e-commerce has **created more jobs between 2007 and January 2020 than bricks-and-mortar retailers lost, according to the Progressive Policy Institute.**

WINTER HOLIDAYS

For decades, Black Friday has attracted massive crowds outside of department stores, malls and major retailers nationwide. But in recent years, more consumers have actively embraced online shopping. In turn, retailers have started spreading their deals and discounts across multiple days instead of making Black Friday the focal point of their holiday plans.

Because online shopping has become more prevalent, retailers need to prepare ahead of the season to ensure that holiday gifts arrive on time to their intended destination.

Retailers have reacted well to the growing reliance on online shopping that has sustained since the beginning of the pandemic, and consumers have generally been understanding of delays and disruptions. But customers are becoming increasingly demanding of digital shopping services.

In 2019, holiday sales were **up 4.1 percent** year over year, according to the Washington, D.C.-based National Retail Federation, with consumers planning to spend a total of \$1,048 on average for items such as decorations, candy and gifts, as well as other purchases for themselves and their families.

U.S. shoppers spent **\$138.65 billion online** last holiday season, up 13.6 percent from the prior year, according to Digital Commerce 360.

Ensuring that items for sale are always well stocked, and having a speedy and reliable delivery process, are the main priorities for retailers right now. During future holiday seasons, retailers that make the online shopping experience easier and more convenient will be poised for success. Although we can expect continued disruption in retail, the main priority of today's retailers should be providing a consistent and reliable service to gain repeat business.

During the annual holiday hiring rush, retailers and warehousing and delivery operations may find it difficult to measure and determine which jobs are necessary and how to staff for them. Many of the jobs that will need filled during future holiday seasons are production, gift assembly, customer service, and distribution and fulfillment center operations. Retailers that want to meet demand and have satisfied customers may find success by launching holiday campaigns early and hiring more workers to keep up with the e-commerce boom.

2019 HOLIDAY SALES

Holiday retail sales
grew 4.1 percent
to \$730.2 billion.

Grocery and beverage
stores were **up 2.9%**
year over year.

Online and other non-store
sales were **up 14.6%**
year over year.

Furniture and home furnishings
stores were **up 2.6%**
year over year.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Back-to-school season is the second-biggest retail event of the calendar year, after the winter holidays. Last year's initial projections saw back-to-school sales expected to reach \$80.7 billion, according to the National Retail Federation. But consumers have faced a great deal of uncertainty that may change the shape of the season in the future.

Back-to-school season looks different now as schools and universities now attempt to redefine their learning environments. Many students from kindergarten to college may be learning at home, which will end up requiring a different set of purchases than in years past.

While laptops, tablets and home office furniture have sold well, basic school supplies, backpacks and clothing have been struggling; and purchases of everything from basic school supplies to dorm room preparations were more modest. Families had to prepare for a variety of scenarios and were typically conservative about their spending habits.

Because of uncertainty around the future on in-person learning, many schools have reconfigured their lesson plans, which could affect school supply lists going forward. Families may elect to skip over the back-to-school shopping routine each year and shift to buy online. Although returning to school may look different in the years ahead, many parents and students will still want to create excitement around this annual tradition.

The shift in consumer preference and increased customer expectations have created new challenges for how retailers serve shoppers during the traditional back-to-school season. Retailers that are not acting quickly and pivoting as needed are likely to struggle during the back-to-school season and other peak sales periods.

PLANNED BACK-TO-SCHOOL SHOPPING PER HOUSEHOLD

2015: \$630.36

2016: \$673.57

2017: \$687.72

2018: \$684.79

2019: \$696.70

PLANNED BACK-TO-COLLEGE SHOPPING PER HOUSEHOLD

2015: \$899.18

2016: \$888.17

2017: \$969.88

2018: \$942.17

2019: \$976.78

Source: National Retail Federation, 2020

OTHER HOLIDAYS

Seasonality has always played a significant role in the fortunes of retailers. It has become critical for them to take advantage of retail seasons like the winter holidays and back-to-school, as well as other significant holidays and cultural events that require their attention. These notable traditions are a golden opportunity for retailers to boost their sales and drive more revenue while further developing their relationship with consumers.

Many retailers may be so busy planning their winter holiday preparations that they overlook one of the prime dates on the calendar each year: the Super Bowl, which typically occurs on the first Sunday of February.

Each year, event staff like stand workers, bartenders and cooks are needed to provide excellent service so that fans who pack the stadium are kept happy. But those are only some of the staffing needs that may arise before the Big Game.

There are so many retailers competing for the public's attention in the leadup to the game, so making sure that they assemble the right staff is a critical key to success. Not only are brands producing television and online ads to get people talking about their products, they can also be found hosting pre- and post-game events to attract consumers and capitalize on the excitement and massive audience the Super Bowl brings each year.

The most common purchases for the Super Bowl include **food and beverages, apparel, decorations, televisions and furniture.**

Nearly **194 million adults** said they had plans for the 2020 Super Bowl.

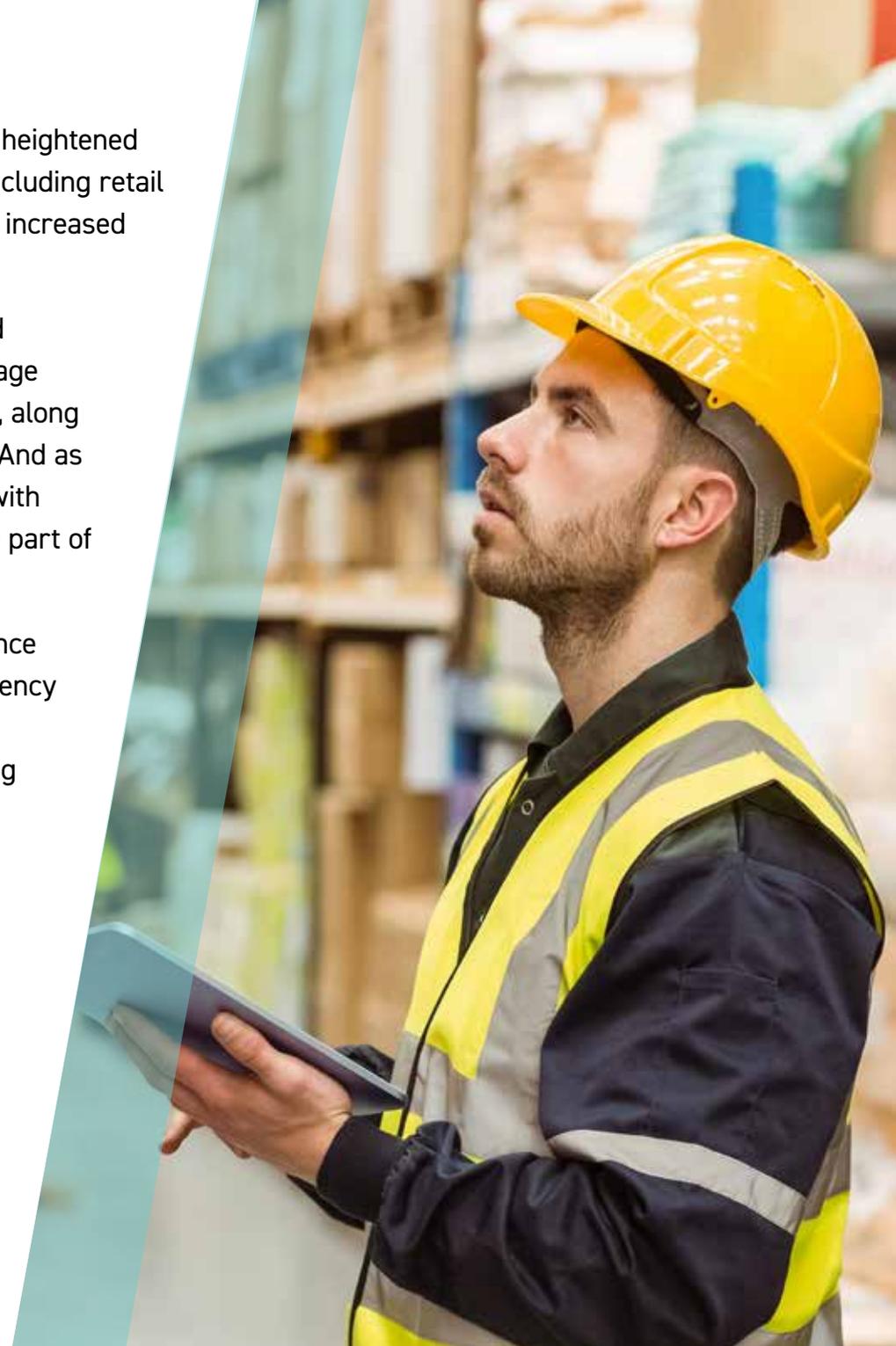
Those watching the event expected to spend an **average \$88.65** on food and beverages, merchandise and party supplies, for a total **\$17.2 billion nationwide.**

Source: NRF and Prosper Insights & Analytics'
2020 Super Bowl survey

Businesses are now operating in an arena of greater competition and heightened demand, and they will need to ask themselves if their current staff—including retail store employees, warehouse workers and event personnel—supports increased sales activity.

With online sales increasing exponentially around the Super Bowl and throughout the year, there will need to be more warehouses and storage facilities where materials can be stored and orders can be completed, along with the staff to make sure these fulfillment processes run smoothly. And as more businesses attempt to jump into the conversation and connect with what's happening around the game, they will need the best staff to be part of the action.

When it comes to generating buzz and creating a memorable experience before, during and after the Super Bowl, partnering with a staffing agency can ensure retailers, manufacturers and other businesses that they have staff with the right skills and experience to score a game-winning touchdown.

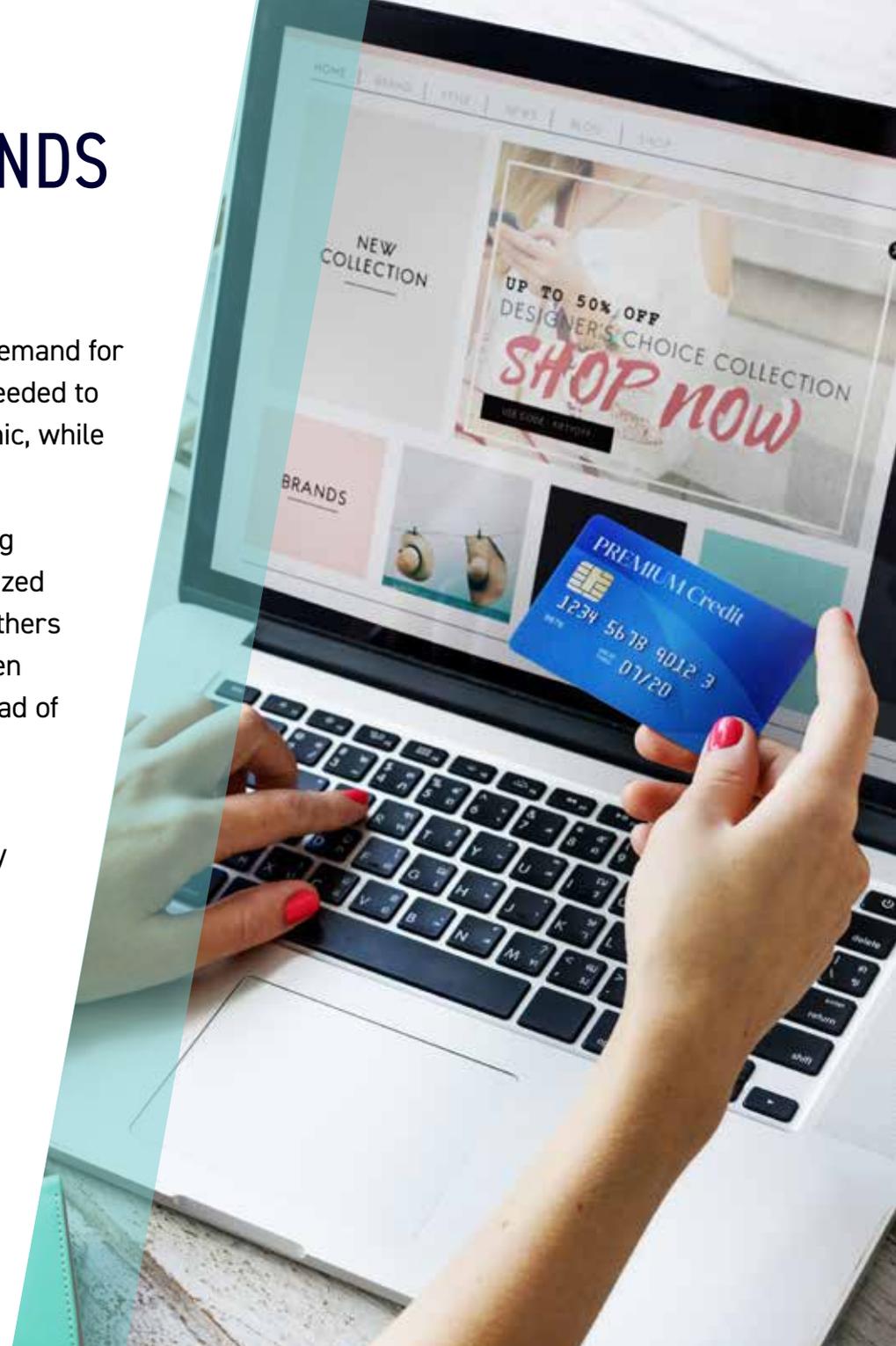


EVOLVING E-COMMERCE DEMANDS OF THE MODERN CONSUMER

In the early stages of the pandemic, there was significant consumer demand for food, toiletries, and other essential household items. Retailers have needed to move quickly to meet consumer demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, while making necessary adjustments to their daily operations.

Some of them successfully adapted to their environment, soon offering buy online, curbside pickup, and other contactless options that prioritized customer safety while providing a convenient shopping experience. Others have struggled to make those same adjustments. Those that have been able to explore new e-commerce opportunities are poised to stay ahead of their competition.

People are still shopping with their favorite retailers, but they're now doing so from the comfort of their own homes. Their lists include daily needs—essential items such as groceries and household supplies—and seasonal wants like clothing and holiday gifts. Now that the shift to online shopping has accelerated in a major way, retailers will need to maintain and even boost their current staffing levels.

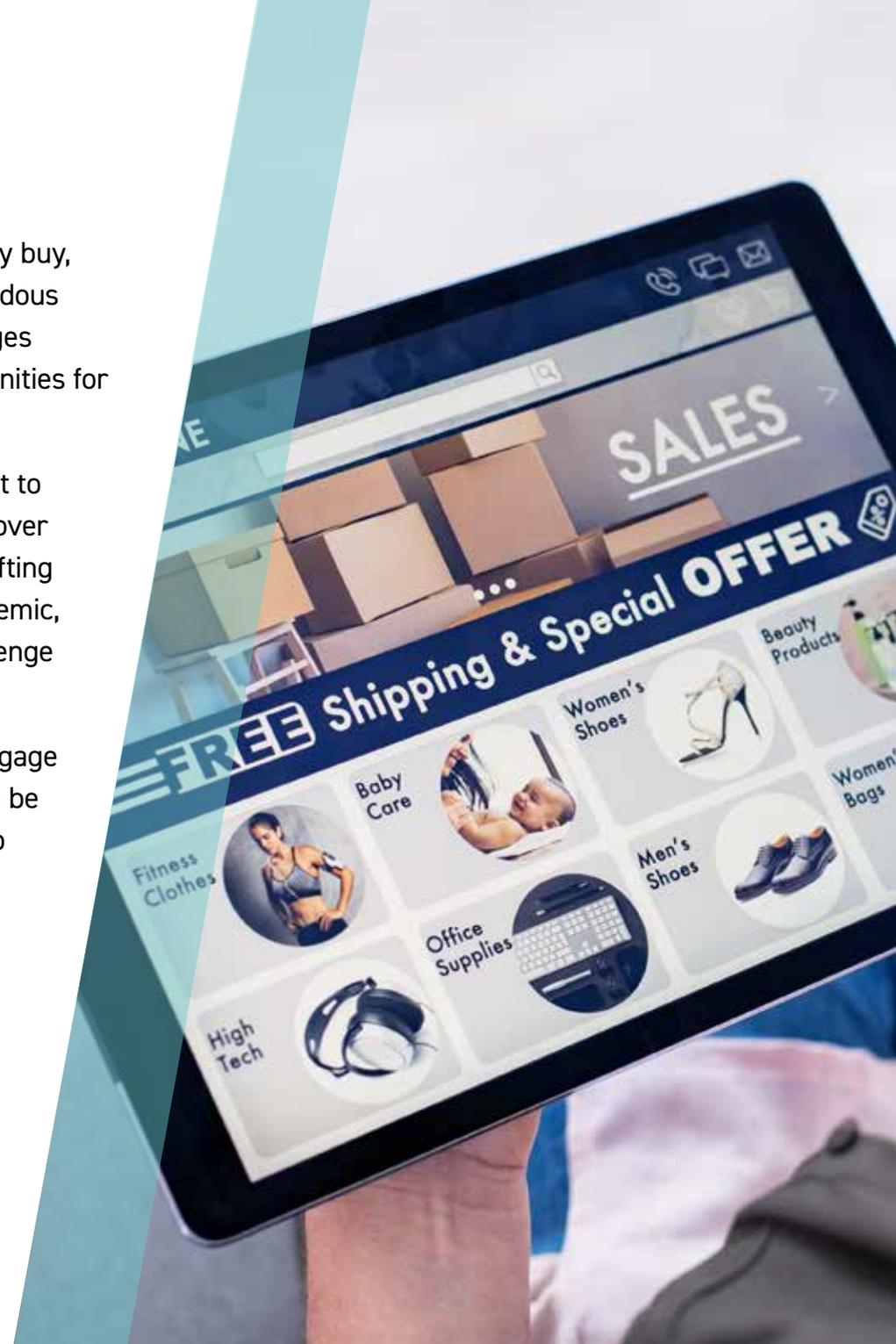


SUMMARY

The pandemic has significantly altered how people shop and what they buy, and these changes in consumer behavior are bound to have a tremendous impact on the economy. Few retail stores are immune from the changes brought about by online shopping, which has introduced new opportunities for retailers to gain a competitive advantage over their counterparts.

The importance for retailers and manufacturers of being able to adapt to new opportunities in e-commerce will have a competitive advantage over their counterparts. Hiring temporary staff can help them navigate shifting schedules and operational changes more effectively. Before the pandemic, 84 percent of retail executives said retaining talent was a major challenge for their business.

As retail leaders plot how they will bounce back, they also need to engage in long-term planning and accelerate future growth. Retailers need to be able to move at top speed, and those that do will be well-positioned to take advantage of a re-imagined world of retail.



ABOUT PEOPLEREADY

PeopleReady has over 30 years of experience partnering with retailers across the country. We have specialty offerings designed to address the specific challenges unique to the retail industry. Our customizable workforce solution will focus on specific points of challenge to provide contingent labor, embrace diverse work groups, maintain a safety focus, and enhance client productivity.

JobStack, PeopleReady's mobile app allows companies to place orders for on-demand or temporary talent from a smartphone or desktop 24/7. With JobStack, you can find workers at any time, confirm their hours, rate their performance, and even invite your favorite workers back. JobStack has filled approximately 6 million shifts since its inception and serves over 20,000 customers.

