



Customer Expectations in the Post-COVID World

These are challenging times, to say the least. Many of us are locked inside our own homes, far away from our customers, not to mention our friends and families. We are watching the stock market take terrible tumbles only to then partially rebound just as quickly. Most worrisome of all, our neighbors, communities, and sometimes those close to us, are getting sick, or worse. Taking a moment to pause and reflect is normal, even healthy. But what we do in these difficult times will be pivotal to our industry's long term viability and success.

I recently read a McKinsey paper called "The CIO's moment: Leadership through the first wave of the coronavirus crisis." that seems particularly motivating in this moment of reflection:

"We know from past crises, in fact, that companies that take a slash-and-hold approach fare worse than those that both prune and thoughtfully invest.

CIOs need to take a through-cycle view and stay committed to broader transformation goals they've been leading such as programs on data, cloud, and agile... The goal for CIOs is to emerge from this not having just "managed" the crisis but being stronger because of it.

For this reason, it's important for CIOs to keep a steady hand on initiatives and programs that can help the business become tech forward."

We know that the world will be changed when the pandemic wave of COVID-19 subsides this year. Just like 9/11 changed the way we travel, COVID-19 is sure to change the way consumers connect with each other, engage with brands in the business world, and work in an economy smaller and more fragile than the one they left.

When it comes to consumer engagement, several businesses will adopt solutions which give comfort to wary customers that the business is paying attention to reducing risks to customer's health as well as the economy.

Here are a few of the ways you can expect our industry to change and adapt:

Touchless payments



With a newfound appreciation and understanding of how viruses and germs are transmitted, and how long they can survive, providing customers with a way to pay through their phone, or “auto-pay” will ensure that you remove not only the friction from the payments process, but also a touchpoint for transmission.

Eliminating physical forms



Fewer clipboards and fewer ballpoint pens mean fewer chances for bacteria and viruses to pass from guest to guest, to say nothing of the time saved by completing forms ahead of an appointment, or the ease with which those forms can be reviewed by practitioners online. Using digital forms offers a seamless opportunity to reduce unnecessary contact. Digital forms are automatically sent to guests’ personal devices. Rather than use a front desk tablet to complete and sign, guests can now use personal devices to complete the check-in process

Real-time wait-queues, kiosks, and push notifications



As beauty and wellness businesses begin to reopen, customers will be wary about their surroundings and being in close proximity to large groups of people. Ensuring they know when their stylist or professional is ready to see

them through the business's mobile app on their phone, or a kiosk in store, without the need to congregate with groups of people, will provide peace of mind and maintain safe distances. An integrated system using push notifications and text messages also allows guests to use their own personal devices to confirm appointments, complete check-in or receive appointment updates. With a connected system, a barbershop guest could get in line from home and arrive just in time for an appointment.

Electronic employee data and payments



Employees and staff will also not want to deal with cash at the counter, and instead will want real-time insights into their anticipated payments. Giving them that insight and electronically moving funds will help them reduce stress on managing their income and handling physical bills and checks. It would also ensure accurate reporting and ease anxiety about future paychecks.

Electronic feedback on business hygiene



People will begin not only commenting on the quality of work by your professionals, but also the safety measures you've taken to ensure their safety. Were hand sanitizers available? Did the provider wash up before touching the guest? Was the front desk staff regularly sanitizing the surfaces in the salon or spa? Previously, having a clean space meant sweeping up hair and ensuring the previous guest's laundry was removed. Going forward, it will include how clean the business actually felt.

These were some examples of the transformations in the customer experience that CIOs will need to drive. But this is just a glimpse into how technology can help your business keep pace with changing customer expectations. After all, consumers are not comparing their experience at your salon/spa with other salons/spas but with other consumer brands that they visit and experience – Uber, AmazonGo, and DoorDash, to name just a few. The world is changing for sure, and how we react to these changes will determine our success in the future.

This downtime is obviously extremely distressing and damaging, but CIOs need to use it as an opportunity to upgrade their systems. A digital transformation is not a luxury, but a need. Better technology will not only help your business recover faster from the COVID-19 crisis, but also thrive when better times are back. Our data shows that people who have adopted these newer digital engagement experiences spend 15% more, have one visit more than others, and have a 20% higher retention rate. We expect that these numbers will only increase due to the shift in behavioral norms.

Zenoti is here to help you with this transformation. Our platform elevates every stage of your customer's interaction with your brand, be it the booking process, the actual visit, or even post-visit engagement. Our centralised, cloud-based approach to your data & processes ensures that the elevated experience you create is consistently delivered across geographies and across outlets. And our constant investment in R&D in cutting-edge areas like AI & ML ensures that your business will always stay ahead of the curve.

If you would like more information on how we at Zenoti could help you not just weather this crisis, but emerge stronger from it, do reach out to us, and we will be happy to partner you into a better tomorrow.

