

Quick Reference Guide

Prepared by



We can't serve the customers who can't find us. The next vital concern for convenience stores is increasing visibility for our online consumers.

Consumers are no longer driving around to find what they want. Instead, they are searching for the nearest car wash, EV charging station, diesel fueling station, or mint chocolate chip ice cream on their mobile phone or with their car's navigation system.

Mastering Search

Our stores need to start showing up in these online spaces, or we risk taking a back seat in our own industry. Lori Buss Stillman, Vice President of Research for NACS, said that “the search by voice made up 50% of all search in 2020 (Source; Alphametrics). Further, their data suggests that 1 in 5 voice search queries use a combination of only 25 keywords. Most are modifiers that imply a question (who, what, where, how, does, etc.). Mastering how our offers are connected to those keywords is one essential step in winning search.” New options to order ahead, use curbside pick-up, or request a delivery, options that have skyrocketed in popularity over the past year, all begin adding value only after the customer knows where to place the order.

Kay Segal, Founder and Managing Partner of The Business Accelerator Team, told us, “Consumers search before and during the path to purchase. Managing online attributes and reputation must be incorporated into brand standards and processes. Retailers must exist on all major online platforms! Voice Search Optimization (VSO), which is similar to SEO for mobile, is and will continue to be necessary to stay competitive. For example, a retail establishment must

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have all attributes of the site identified, such as car wash, gas, diesel, propane, food - and identifying the kinds of food, from pizza to fried chicken, etc. The more detail the better, and retailers must gain control over their listings. This plays into using specific words and phrases so that when someone is using voice search, the location is identified.”

Embracing Mobile

E-commerce is possible for all retailers through emerging technology. Many retailers entered the COVID-19 pandemic with no mobile app and no online order ahead options. Some may not yet have a website. So how does a small to mid-size retailer make the leap into e-commerce? When the IT staff is not able to take on the labor lift to implement e-commerce in house, start looking for ready-made solutions. John Nelson, CEO of Vroom Delivery, said, “Retailers of all sizes find that Vroom Delivery can provide an e-commerce platform more cost effectively than attempting to build one from the ground up.”

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The convenience store of the future is digital, including payments. COVID-19 has taught us to be more wary of touching things, including the keypads on payment terminals. Contactless options like Skip, an open platform mobile app that consumers download to their personal device, allow consumers to shop and pay without touching and with no cashier interference. Pervez Pir, Chief Operating Officer for Loop Neighborhood Markets, stated that “we as retailers need to focus on increasing loyalty programs so we engage and hold onto the customer. We need to build a loyalty app that allows the customer to order and pay on our app regardless of who delivers.”

Mobile payment options make every convenience store a digital store. Clerley Silveira, Conexus’ API Coordinator, has observed that “as consumers get more familiar with technology, they come to expect a more immersive experience. They not only want to be able to scan items themselves, pay for the items purchased, but they also would like merchandise delivered to them when it is more convenient. In some ways, technology and convenience have become synonymous.” To support this radical shift, Conexus is developing new API standards for mobile payments, digital offers, and more to support the digital store. You can view our API progress here: conexus.org/ourwork/api-development-roadmap.

Partnering with Conexus

Conexus enables all industry stakeholders to improve their profitability by providing data and operations standards, technology innovation and advocacy. Our work reduces the implementation costs, maintenance and time-to-market of enterprise system automation. Our community is comprised of the brightest technologists in the industry; providing clarity in a complex technology landscape and ready network to help your company maximize its technology investments. Our involvement, in partnership with NACS, with broad-market vendors, standards bodies and regulatory entities ensures the technology landscape comprehends our industry’s interests.

Join us in the conversation. Join Conexus membership and be a part of the solution.



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Redefining Convenience

Consumers habitually choose the easiest path to get what they need. And they remember what was easy the next time, or their virtual assistant will remember for them. Ms. Stillman imparted another sobering statistic on how consumers are changing: “At present, 40 million Americans own a smart speaker, and it is expected that 55% of all US households will own at least one speaker by the end of 2022. At last count, our home has more than 10 – when we include our vehicles – making this capability now a part of our daily routine. I suspect for many other households, our number is quite low.”

The consumer is already developing new habits that are redefining convenience for us. Are we listening? How many of the changes retailers have made to adapt during COVID-19 have potential for long-term growth? Mr. Nelson noted that “grocery e-commerce is currently at the same level as the beginning months of the pandemic. The level dipped for a couple of months but has returned to the higher levels.” Retailers must look ahead to find the frictionless path.

Mr. Nelson also shared a timely warning with us. “Don’t be out-convenienced.”