

# BUILDING SAFER RETAIL ENVIRONMENTS WITH IOT



Coming out of the holiday season and the year we had in 2020, many ideologies and technologies were used to keep businesses afloat while also opening the door for new retail strategies and their likely adoption. The Postal Service and third-party logistics groups worked around-the-clock to ensure that everyone's holiday packages were delivered in a timely fashion. With last mile delivery, BOPIS, lockers and other effective procedures, employees were clocking overtime to combat the pandemic's negative effects on both retail and warehouse operations during the month of December. IoT, AI, blockchain, and machine learning were additional drivers pulling the weight during this overload in the supply chain.

It's the hope of many that these powerhouse technologies will stick around for the time to come, even after the days of COVID-19 are over. The concept of change always presents us with a world of opportunity, no matter how light or dark the change may ultimately exhibit itself. [IoT has begun to help the retail](#) realm emerge better and stronger after the harshest moments of the pandemic. Linking up with artificial intelligence, retailers are able to enhance their customers' omnichannel perspective and maximize on boosting customer experiences moving forward. Such personalization helps retailers to better acquaint themselves with their regular customers and provide specific communications, via emails and app notifications to curate individual and unique campaigns to get customers back in-store and online.

From a marketing perspective, IoT can unlock a world of potential for retailers to score big with their biggest consumer base, but at the same time, safety is a huge priority for customers as well. [Many shoppers are hesitant to return](#) to physical brick-and-mortar storefronts, due to the rapid spread of the virus, and with the virus having the ability to spread within close contact of others, many shops are imposing strict social and physical distancing mandates.

IoT can help keep businesses on track with social distancing measures, without putting any added strains on working staff members. [With the use of sensors](#), grocery stores and retail shops can monitor customers' movements throughout the aisles and issue warnings when an area gets too overcrowded. Making sure this data is recorded correctly can save a retail store from a world of backlash if positive cases were to arise.

Another large benefit to IoT in retail environments includes the capability to promote positive food safety monitoring activities. Such retailers are adopting IoT strategies to monitor the temperatures of storage spaces and grocery store coolers. This is vital especially when it comes to sensitive products such as dairy and meats. Perishable foods are sure to spoil and deteriorate if not properly stored and cared for, and in the long run grocery store chains can suffer an immense amount of [hurt and loss from spoilage](#) alone. In times like this, that is the last thing that these retailers should have to endure. Temperature-tracing sensors can be attached to the interior of such cooling/heating containers to alert employees in a case that abnormal temperature levels are recorded and captured. That real-time data is able to be communicated to those in charge to prevent the perishing and spoiling of various food items in-store.

It's no secret that IoT holds the potential to level up any retail environment in accordance with public health guidelines. From smart shelves and storage containers, smart carts, cashier-less options, and even methods to keep shoppers shopping within six feet apart from each other to continue the flow of a semi-normal shopping experience. A positive feat that arose from 2020 continues to be the plethora of COVID-19 based solutions that were uniquely and specially crafted out in an attempt to educate our channel-oriented partners on how to fill the needs brought on by the pandemic itself. From temperature recording processes to countertop shields, there are so many innovative solutions from some of our vendors and technology software companies that are worth mentioning: like the [Capacity Control Application from Elo](#) or even the [Tamper-Proof Labeling Solution from Star Micronics](#), and the list goes on and on.

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