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## CEO Insight – Retail Trends

### Is it Time to Think About the Holidays?

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**By: Janet Hawkins, CEO & Founder Opterus Inc.**

We are in the midst of the back-to-school season, but I don't think it's too early to start thinking about the holidays. As everything begins to open again and we are getting a feeling of normalcy, it does not come without setbacks. In some cases, there are renewed lockdowns as covid variants cause new cases to be on the rise. And even though things are opening, the economic hit that a lot of us have experienced will impact holiday spending this season.

Everything we have gone through in the last 18-24 months will influence the holiday season, which accounts for a large percentage of overall annual revenue for retail sales. But there is also sense of excitement in the air. Shopping in stores adds to the magic of the holidays, quenches our desire for normalcy and helps us feel like we are getting back to a familiar routine.

After previous lockdowns we saw an increase of consumers venturing out to physical store locations and an increase in spending. This is great news. However, this holiday season will not be like 2020 but it will also not be like 2019. I think the season and the eagerness to start shopping is going to start early and retailers will need to have speed of execution and the flexibility to not only meet the needs of the consumer but adapt quickly to the changing environment.

To encourage traffic to your stores you need to make sure your associates are prepared to execute your directives so that the stores are ready.

- Health and safety and convenience will be a major concern of the consumer. Make sure you have implemented policies and procedures to ensure the health and safety of staff and consumers.
- The customer experience is going to be more important than ever. To showcase and display products in your store to enhance the customer experience you need to make sure your store execution is done on accurately and on time.
- Consumers have waited so long to go shopping in person so the last thing they want is to have to wait around for an associate to find the product they are looking for or find it not available in store. Have visibility early to correct store signage and displays and make sure products are available and ready for your customers.
- Spotlight unique gift ideas with a focus on family and sentiment as these past months have been very emotional for so many of us.

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