

The Road Map for Navigating E-commerce Partnerships in the UK During COVID-19

Between March 23 and April 17, 2020, Advantage Group UK surveyed 35 suppliers to uncover the impact that COVID-19 has had on their relationships with e-commerce retailers to understand how both partners can work better together today and in the event of a second crisis wave. For UK e-commerce retailers and suppliers to succeed during and post-crisis, partnership is pivotal. The following learnings can be applied to support getting products delivered to homes efficiently and safely.

Current Considerations

- ✓ Work quickly and collaboratively to address surge in demand
- ✓ Be transparent and open: share challenges and the steps being taken to address them
- ✓ Pick up the phone versus communicating via email
- ✓ Retailers want to talk about the present; Suppliers understand that future planning will have to wait
- ✓ Promotions are not the focus in the present

*“Everything is changing at pace given COVID-19...we are **trying to find collaborative and creative ways of helping** with fulfilling the demand and leveraging space online.”*

*“We are just trying to get as much stock to our customers as we can. The whole strategy has fallen by the wayside at the moment, **it is literally how much stock can we produce and how quickly can we get it to them.** We are not having a separate conversation off the back of COVID-19 with the dot.com trading teams, it is purely with the main trading teams and supply chains.”*

Future Considerations

- ✓ Communicate and collaborate with suppliers openly and regularly
- ✓ Share challenges, priorities and plans
- ✓ Maintain transparency around product availability and forecasting
- ✓ Give suppliers as much notice as possible about changing plans
- ✓ Share data
- ✓ Fix existing online issues
- ✓ Clarify future online strategies based on the new environment

*“We need to make sure that we are really clear on availability of products...**we do not want to annoy shoppers** by having it on the website but when it comes to their shop being delivered, it not being there.”*

*“**E-Commerce Retailers need to be clear on what they want to achieve...** Are they still looking to attract new shoppers? Do they want to continue to drive dot.com growth or is it about transferring people from dot.com to in-store shopping to drive the profit? **They need to show us their strategy and then we can work out how we can support that.**”*

Second Wave Actions

- ✓ Share learnings from the first wave and build contingency plans together
- ✓ React quickly to apply learnings from the first wave at the start of the second
- ✓ Invest in technology
- ✓ Communicate limitations around delivery and availability to shoppers early
- ✓ Quickly switch on additional dark stores so online is not picked in-store
- ✓ Increase depot capacity, picking slots, drivers, and delivery vans
- ✓ Work proactively with suppliers on key product ranges

*“Having an increased number of delivery trucks, and the ability to quickly switch on additional dark stores...**doubling or tripling the amount of dark stores**...only serving online deliveries from those stores”*

*“**In the event of a second COVID-19 wave, the measures that E-Commerce Retailers could take to better respond to the crisis would be taking what they have learnt from this to date, and doing it sooner...** It's things like reducing the range to the bare minimum and limiting the number of products each consumer can order.”*