



Nudge

Build store teams that are ready for what's next: A three-phase playbook

Frontline associates will be the driving force for businesses to preserve through and beyond the pandemic. Support them across three key phases of engagement.

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Introduction

The retail industry has been one of the hardest hit, during the COVID-19 pandemic, with sudden closures, social distancing measures, and reopening under strict guidelines. As expected, the rapid adjustments to resourcing and business operations have taken a heavy toll on frontline associates.



Things won't go back to normal

Gallup research on what employees need from leadership, specifically as it relates to the impact of COVID-19, reveals that only:

39%

of employees feel their employer has communicated a clear plan of action

48%

strongly agree their immediate supervisor keeps them informed about what is going on in the organization

54%

feel well-prepared to do their work

As retailers continue to navigate the unknown of what's coming next—possible closures or more restrictions—there's a race to capture market share, and it's retail employees who are critical to brand recovery, particularly those on the frontline. Your associates will require the tools to keep them aligned and engaged through a phased approach that takes into account their unique needs at each stage.

Throughout the pandemic, the team at Nudge have had hundreds of conversations with retailers around navigating the rapid changes to store hours, location closures, and frontline employment arrangements. We've developed a playbook based on the learnings that have surfaced and the best practices we've developed to support our customers, and in turn, their store associates.

PHASE 1:

Cultivate engagement

Your brand is your most precious asset, and right now it wields extraordinary potential for helping to stabilize your frontline workforce. Employees are likely still feeling anxious, isolated, and experiencing increased pressure as numbers continue to rise. Lean on your brand to comfort, engage, and motivate them in ways that they are seeking out.

In a Nudge webinar, employee engagement expert Denise Lee Yohn discussed how your brand is an important point of intersection to connect your employees to your mission, your customers, and to each other.



“Whether employees have been furloughed, are working remotely, or working in new delivery channels and new modes, it’s important to cultivate your relationship with them immediately, as your brand can be a powerful connector.”

—Denise Lee Yohn, Author, *What Great Brands Do*, and *FUSION*

Lean on your brand to connect your employees to:

Your mission:

Great brands embody and express the company's overarching purpose. It's a fundamental factor that connects employees to your mission and helps them derive meaning from their work. Remind your employees why your organization exists and make sure they understand how their work contributes. The shared overarching purpose will be a source of much needed stability as retailers preserve through the pandemic.

Customers:

Social distancing measures have consumers craving human connection more than ever, and remains a critical component of the customer journey, even if it's at a distance. Because your brand is about the value and the experience that you deliver to customers, it will serve as a reference point to keep customers top of mind. Share stories and feedback on how your organization has created value for customers, possibly in new and different ways, during the crisis.

Each other:

Your brand can foster a sense of shared purpose and align employees with each other in powerful ways if you offer them a way of connecting and collaborating. Remind them of great moments when employees came together to overcome challenges, or how existing employees are working together to interpret and reinforce your brand in these challenging times.

To cultivate employee engagement, retailers can use their brand to connect with associates and reinforce a sense of purpose on why they're doing what they do, who they do it for, and who they're doing it with. As you highlight these connections, it's important to keep in mind that engagement is, by definition, two-way. Provide opportunities for employees to submit questions, ideas, and feedback, and then remind them that they've been heard, through bi-directional dialogue.

PHASE 2:

Ensure preparedness

Retail operations continue to evolve, and likely will not revert back to the way they were pre-pandemic. Your store teams will need to continue adopting new standards, practices, skills, and habits as consumers continue to adjust and expect more of the brands they purchase from. Keeping your staff knowledgeable, by ensuring they are equipped with the tools they need to communicate with customers about what has changed, will drive loyalty.

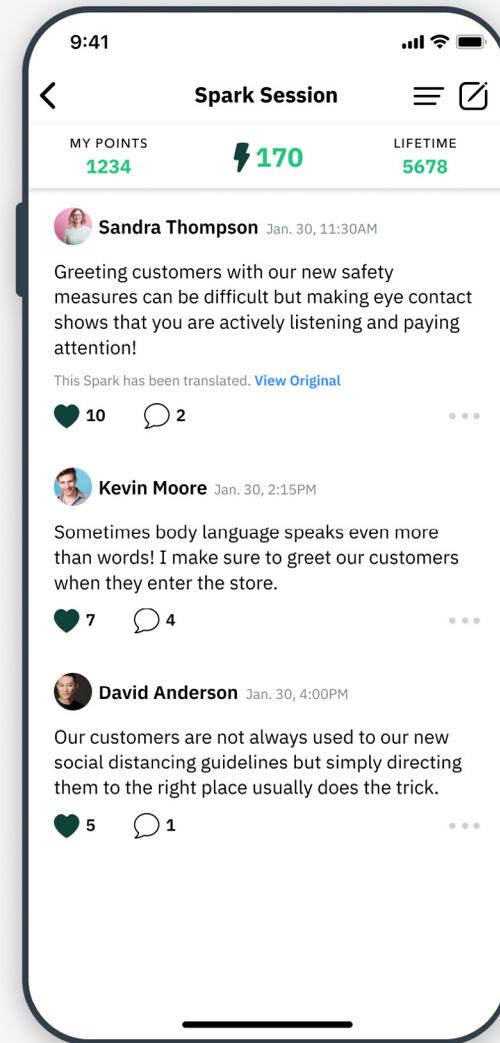
We recommend distinct strategies for equipping three different groups of your frontline, which includes existing, returning, and new employees. While unity and alignment are important, each group will require a tailored approach.



Existing employees:

These are the staff members who have been working throughout the crisis and your organization will be counting on them for stability and continuity as newcomers join and rejoin.

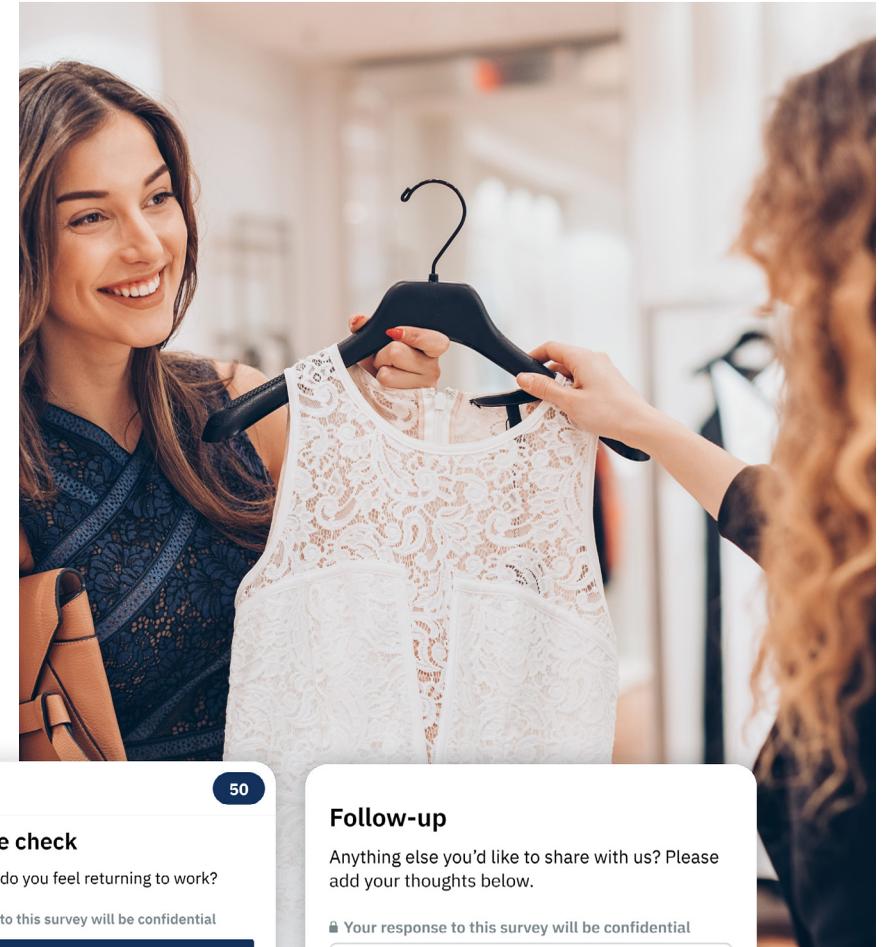
The role of your frontline managers in creating this stable environment can't be understated. Now, more than ever, it's important to ensure your managers understand what's expected of them. Also, equip and empower your existing employees to train and support their new and returning teammates. In recognition of all the work that your existing employees have done, during the crisis, and to encourage retention, it may also be time to consider ramping up recognition efforts.



Returning employees:

Employees who were furloughed or laid off and are able to return will require a different approach. It's important to keep in mind that their previous status as an employee doesn't guarantee that they're eager and ready to jump back into work. They may have found temporary work in the meantime, or be hesitant to return due to sudden circumstances. If ever there was a time to incorporate empathy into a stage of the employee lifecycle, it's now, and with this group.

Develop a re-onboarding program that reinforces key points from the standard onboarding framework, and update content to reflect changes, like new safety measures or policies that have been implemented or surfaced. It's important to take the time to consider what kind of retraining or new skill development they will need, given the ways operations continue to unfold.



Survey 50

Confidence check

How confident do you feel returning to work?

Your response to this survey will be confidential

Very confident

Neutral

Not confident

Follow-up

Anything else you'd like to share with us? Please add your thoughts below.

Your response to this survey will be confidential

With new safety precautions put in place, I would love to have additional training sessions to go over our new implementations.

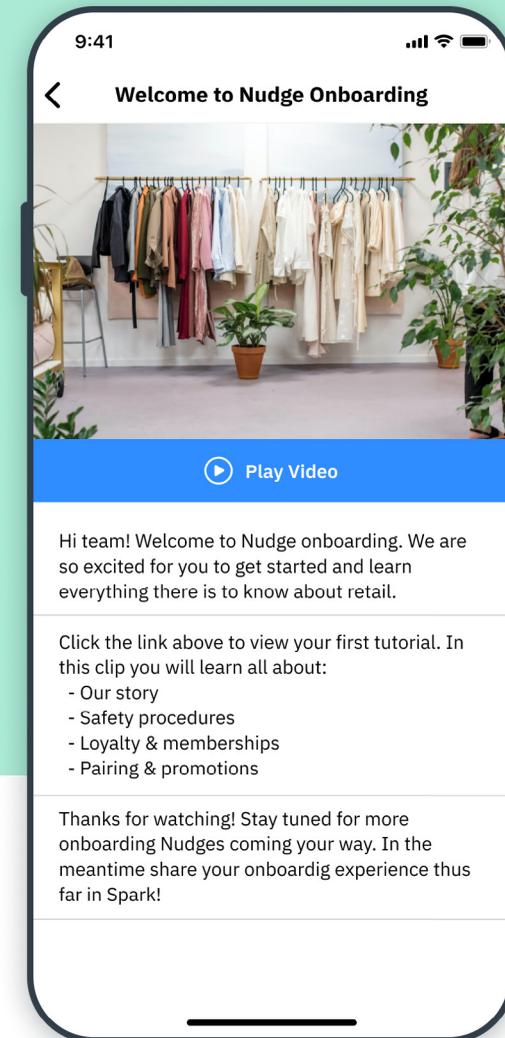
Submit

New employees:

Who and how you hire may be different now, given the need to do more with fewer resources. Even returning employees will be adjusting to challenging contexts of change and re-engagement. Ensure that the pace at which you hire isn't disrupting the customer or employee experience. Again, this is an important hiring consideration at any time for retailers, but a particularly sensitive point of consideration now.

Ensure you've updated your standard onboarding content to reflect the necessary changes. And given the large influx of new associates you'll be dealing with, it's important to pay special attention, making newcomers feel welcome and supported by everyone, managers and employees alike.

It's time for a thoughtful and deliberate approach to designing and managing the employee experience. There is high competition for talent, especially as retail brands can't assume associates who have been laid off will easily return. Employees also have increased needs that are different from those they had prior to the crisis. Offering a unique and engaging employee experience that takes into account different segments of the frontline can help overcome these challenges.



PHASE 3:

Redefine success

For new and returning employees, we know the first 30-60-90 days on the job are critical, as they ramp up to a level of productivity required to create safe environments and meet the heightened expectation of customers. The same goes for existing employees who continue to face evolving operational changes. Capture insights with pulse surveys, quizzes, and confidence challenges to optimize team productivity, satisfaction, and retention.



Key metrics for frontline success

In optimizing the role of your frontline, we recommend three key metrics to evaluate success. Review areas of high and low engagement and knowledge, and use the insights to ensure you're reinforcing what matters, and that managers are coaching where they need to.



Engagement with brand communications

Ensure that you're measuring how much and in what way employees are engaging with your brand communications.



Knowledge of products and services

Measure your associates' knowledge of the products and services offered. We know that knowledge leads to confidence and confidence leads to conversion when it comes to retail sales.



Alignment of employee behavior to customer expectations

Both EX and CX has changed, and making sure both of these fundamental areas are aligned with company metrics, goals, and success criteria will be critical.

As you build your frontline employee strategy, don't wait for perfect. Go ahead and capture market share. The retailers who lead the pack during the pandemic, and well into the next stages of post-COVID realities, will be those who have data readily available and can adapt accordingly.

Retail communications that create better experiences

An engaged and knowledgeable workforce is the key to creating memorable in-store experiences. Mobilize your store associates with the industry's most-loved communications platform and provide staff with the information, inspiration, and insights they need to do great work, every day.



Drive in-store sales



Improve customer experiences



Increase staff retention



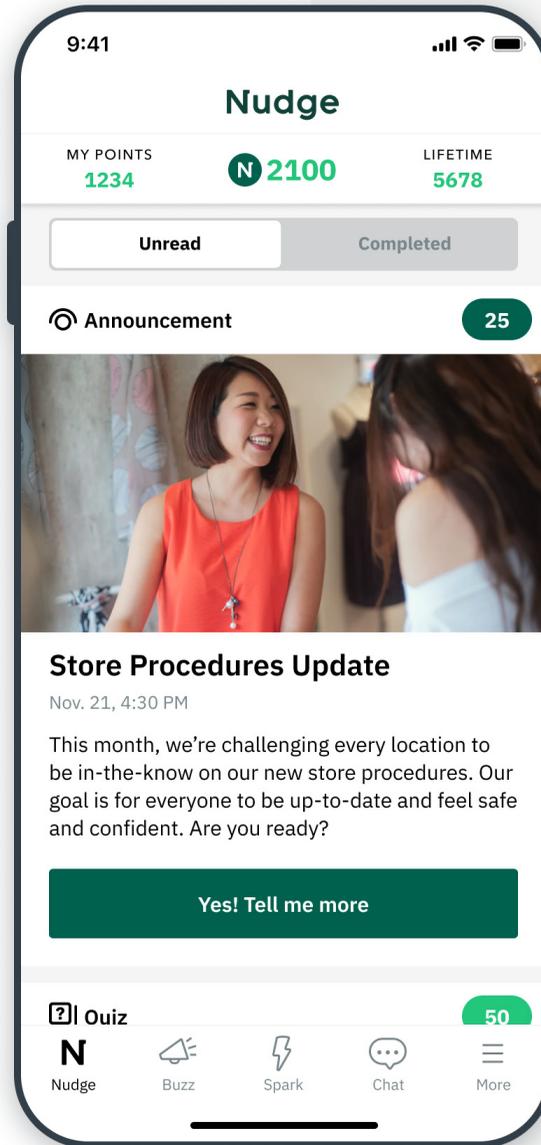
Reduce location costs

“Nudge is a game-changer for the retail landscape, and has done wonders for our teams who are highly engaged and have a place to share their voice, enabling us to communicate with our frontline like never before.”

– Chad McKinnon, President, Golf Town and Sporting Life



Don't take our word for it – ask Nudge users!



 **Haylie Torff** Yesterday, 11:30 AM

Thank you for sharing warm & positive information every day! Thanks to Nudge, I feel like I know some of you already. It's a tough time for everyone, but I believe that we will get through this together.

 12  12 

 **Chance Mango** Yesterday, 2:00 PM

Thanks to the Nudge app, we have so much more information about what's going on with COVID-19. Plus, I've been able to concentrate on all the great information provided to us and stay connected to my teammates!

 15  10 

 **Abhoy Latif** Yesterday, 1:30 PM

Nudge is awesome and keeping me sane right now! I love seeing what my colleagues are doing and how they are coping. I feel so much more connected with my colleagues than ever before.

 7  3 

Let's mobilize *your* frontline

You believe in your people, and so do we. Together, let's make sure your frontline employees and managers feel supported as they come back to work. Our team is here to help you get back to your "new normal" sooner and will work with you every step of the way to activate your plan and navigate the new realities of your business.

We hope this playbook will leave you inspired and get you thinking about how you can help your frontline workforce reach their potential with direct, two-way communications that inspire confidence and competence.

Want to learn more?

Contact us to learn more about how we can work with your brand to drive employee performance and engagement in ways that are meaningful to your business.

Email hello@nudgerewards.com to get in touch or visit www.nudgerewards.com/demo to schedule a product demo.

About Nudge

Nudge is a communications platform that empowers deskless employees and drives better outcomes for your business. Backed by the power of behavioral science and the highest user ratings in its category, Nudge mobilizes non-desk teams by providing the information, inspiration, and insights employees need to exceed expectations and stay connected at work. Leading brands such as Compass Group, Staples, and Margaritaville rely on Nudge to boost employee engagement, exceed sales goals, and transform the customer experience.

For more information, please visit www.nudgerewards.com.