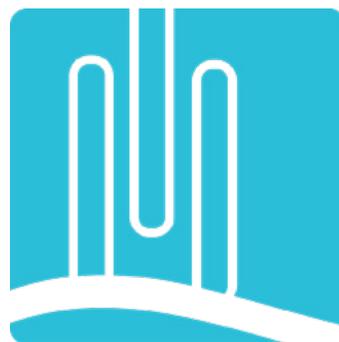


FIVE COVID-19 INNOVATION TRENDS IN

DOWNTOWN EDMONTON



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As businesses face a new normal and try to remain connected with customers, many are finding unique ways to reframe and adopt technologies that offer expansion opportunities. We identified Downtown businesses that are diversifying their approach to meet changing purchasing decisions. This report looks at five innovative trends that are allowing companies to reposition and have a long-lasting impact beyond the Coronavirus pandemic.

1.0 New Business Models

Tip 1: Cater to Changing Needs

In response to the current pandemic, the release of city-mandated, social-distancing restrictions halted several businesses, forcing many to rethink operations. Businesses across Downtown are reframing how they connect with and deliver products or services to customers. With many confined to their living space, companies are shifting their approach to expand beyond their business location. We suggest finding new ways to reposition in the market and adjust your unique offerings to fit changes in demand.

Offer a Shared Experience

These restaurants invite customers to partake in the creation process.

- ▶ **Corso 32** launched “Corso at Home,” a weekly menu with ingredients and instructions to cook meals fresh at home.
- ▶ **The Common** offered takeout cocktail kits, home BBQ packs and grazing boxes for customers to assemble.
- ▶ **Milkcrate** hosted virtual cooking classes with Chef Steven Brochu. [Link](#).

2.0 Online Engagement

Tip 2: Upgrade Customer Platforms

Businesses are using e-commerce to get online, reach customers directly, pinpoint and widen their target market through social media advertising. Online engagement tools, such as Google Analytics, Survey Monkey and Zendesk can help businesses gather customer preference data to improve advertising efforts. We suggest using this time to upgrade tech platforms, create an online e-commerce store through Shopify or set up a website through easy-to-use platforms like Wix or Squarespace to help customers find your product or service online.

Backstop Brick & Mortar

These organizations use social media and e-commerce as a launching pad.

- ▶ **Shop Chop** used Instagram as their primary online shopping channel in the absence of a website.
- ▶ **Dorinku** immediately added compatible e-commerce with their website for takeout orders.
- ▶ **XTherapy** transitioned to promoting online classes and at home workout challenges through Instagram.

3.0 Virtual Events

Tip 3: Continue to Host Customers

Estimates show a 50% to 70% increase in Internet use for online entertainment and more.¹ Local service-orientated businesses can utilize increased interest by creating an online experience through teleconferencing, remote consultations, 3D tours and Facebook Live. Virtual events allow businesses to find and reach new markets. We suggest considering which online tools will best serve your customers and their preferences, as well as initiatives that will complement the organization's current value offering.

4.0 IT/Tech Modernization

Tip 4: Improve Digital Security

With increased vulnerability, organizations face an added threat to cybersecurity. Attackers are employing new phishing and ransomware schemes using the coronavirus as bait. Many companies increase security risk by relying on virtual private network (VPN) servers used to assist employees working from home. We suggest combating corruption by securing VPNs and passwords, writing remote working policies, educating employees about online schemes and prioritizing cybersecurity.

5.0 Community Support

Tip 5: Use Strengths to Fill a Need

While many organizations face similar challenges, each experiences the pandemic differently. There are companies, individuals and sectors who are struggling more than others. Downtown businesses are supporting the community by donating resources, producing needed equipment, following health guidelines and sharing information. If able, we suggest companies survey and repurpose resources to meet new needs and help strengthen Downtown's resiliency.

¹ COVID-19 Pushes Up Internet Use 70% And Streaming More Than 12%, First Figures Reveal. (March 25, 2020). Forbes.

Become a Local Expert

These organizations are inviting customers to continue exploring their space virtually.

- ▶ **Latitude 53** offered virtual exhibitions, book clubs, discussions and interviews.
- ▶ **Art Gallery of Alberta** used social media, [@youraga](#), to provide virtual tutorials, panels, webinars and field trips.
- ▶ **Edmonton Jewish Film Festival** hosted virtual film screenings, online Pub Talks and Lunch Chats.

Protect Your Company Online

These IT companies help organizations protect themselves in the digital sphere.

- ▶ **Solūt** controls your digital environment by securing systems both in your office and on your corporate device.
- ▶ **CGI** employs 1,700+ cybersecurity experts to help clients follow best practices.
- ▶ **Yellow Pencil** works with the public sector to secure and protect data as it moves around the web.

Give Back Where You Can

These organizations use their strengths to support other Downtown sectors.

- ▶ **#YEGTechCares** YEG Tech companies donated a portion of salary for three months to the Edmonton Food Bank. [Link](#).
- ▶ **Oodle Noodle** donated hundreds of meals each week and partnered with three charitable organizations. [Link](#).
- ▶ **The Local Good** mobilized Edmontonians who want to lead more sustainable lives and support the local economy.