Wishing You a Joyful Holiday

As the end of 2020 draws near, we at ECHOtape would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your extraordinary kindness and support in what has been the world's most challenging year. The success of our business is based on the relationships we have built over 45 years, and we are so grateful for your continued support in the wake of COVID-19.

Many years ago, we decided that in lieu of sending cards and gifts, we would donate our holiday budget to a charity geared to helping others. This is a tradition we have proudly kept going for over 25 years. We've been blessed to donate generously to The Special Olympics, The Children's Wish Foundation, Free the Children, The One Drop Foundation, Plan International's "Because I Am A Girl" campaign, Autism Speaks, and Doctors Without Borders.

For 2020, we have once again selected the Red Cross to benefit from our donation. Every year, the Red Cross is at the scene of disasters and emergencies both at home and around the world. This year especially, the Red Cross is dedicated to supporting individuals, families and communities during the pandemic.

Founded in 1881, North America's leading emergency relief and preparedness organization offers assistance, training, and preparedness services to hundreds of millions of people each year. And **every 8 minutes** the *Red Cross* responds to some emergency, working tirelessly to deliver relief to victims of

disasters and emergencies. Some of the ways in which they support communities include providing supplies, cots, blankets, and clean-up kits for vulnerable populations. They operate a call center to ensure that vulnerable individuals in isolation have a mechanism for receiving food. They also go door-to-door to determine how isolated individuals are coping, and to ensure their immediate needs are met, which includes food and medicine supply. Learn more at redcross.org

The holidays may look a little different this year, but we hope the important things remain—spending time with loved ones, sharing joy and giving back however we can. We hope that through our participation, we can make a difference.

At this time of year, we are grateful for our partnership with you. We wish you good health, happiness, and peace in a new year filled with hope.

Happy Holidays from our family to yours.

10 Ways Covid-19 Will Change

Business Forever

COVID-19 has forced businesses worldwide into a precarious balancing act – protecting the health and safety of their employees while simultaneously continuing operations. Like all essential businesses, we are working through this challenge ourselves. And as weeks turn into months, it's become increasingly obvious to us that business is forever changed.

It's imperative that small businesses embrace the new normal and start working on adapting.

With our eyes firmly on the horizon, here's our 10 best predictions on business "after" pandemic.

10 Trends for Business "After" Pandemic

1. WFH. If there's any sure thing in this Coronavirus world, it's that Work From Home (WFH) isn't going anywhere. Sure we miss our co-workers and water cooler gossip, but not enough to trade in pajamas for a 30-minute commute. Companies need to embrace the virtual workforce. Now that more people have had a taste of it and proven their productivity, it will be hard for companies to take that flexibility away from their talent.

A Gallup survey revealed that 54% of U.S. workers would leave their current job for one that allowed them to work remotely.

2. HQ 2.0. Once there are treatments and vaccines, offices will be designed to foster and promote interaction and community rather than closed-door productivity. Nothing will take the place of the serendipitous group-think that often leads to creativity and innovation, and COVID-19 has made us appreciate those interactions more than ever.

3. Wellness leadership. Now that we've all experienced feelings of isolation in a social-less environment, successful businesses will need corporate leaders to manage the mental health of their workforce as well as their productivity. HR departments and team leaders will be tasked with creating unique, innovative ways of engaging their virtual workforce to ensure that no employee feels detached from the rest of the team. Giving rise to a new kind of business "coach" if you will.

4. Work-ready design. As new homes are built or existing ones are remodeled, WFH considerations will be a top priority. Internet in homes will improve, drastically and quickly, and home offices with home video studios will become selling features. Technology will be developed to create an environment that more closely resembles a WeWork than a suburban townhouse.

A study by GetApp reports that the majority of survey respondents cited a lack of proper technology for remote work

that hindered their success and productivity.

5. Real estate redesign. While employees were celebrating their 30-second commute, it became clear to companies that the huge P&L item for real estate may not be the best way to spend their money. Having people work from home—even if it's not everyone all the time—is proving to be profitable.

This will have an impact on the real estate industries as most office buildings will be forced into residential offerings. Major cities will experience an explosion of square footage for residential buildings— with whole floors dedicated to co-working amenities— and that will significantly reduce the cost of renting. Likewise, suburban developments will need a significant boost in technical infrastructure and lifestyle amenities to compete with a more-affordable city center.

6. E-learning for everyone. Right now, primary education is Ground Zero for e-Learning. There will be huge shifts in the way we teach our children in a post-COVID world. That said, from a business perspective, many companies realize that up-skilling is essential for innovation and strategic advantage. As in-person workshops and seminars go by the wayside, successful businesses will invest in dynamic e-learning solutions to guide their ongoing training.

7. Video goes mainstream. The developers behind Zoom, WebEx, Google Hangouts, and Skype made WFH possible. We believe this will hugely impact change front-facing service roles as customers look for real humans on the other end of the screen.

In fact, watch for video chat to replace text chat in the near future.

8. The end of email. Ok, maybe that's a stretch. However, this trend has been increasing for a while now. With millions of workers trying to do their jobs from home, we are going to see faster, more efficient communication tools be adopted at a record pace. For context, it took Slack almost five years (2015 to 2020) to go from 1 million to 10 million users. In March 2020 alone, Slack added 2.5 million users—and is still growing rapidly.

9. The rise of a contact-free economy. In terms of e-commerce, the pandemic has accelerated the change in online shopping habits we already saw happening. However, the figures for telemedicine exploded. So much so, the U.S. has changed regulations to ease access to telemedicine, and Teladoc Health, the largest independent U.S. telemedicine service, is adding thousands of doctors to its network, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

10. Redefining business resilience. Even post-pandemic, companies will continue to rethink, if not tweak, their business models. Companies will have to strengthen backup and safety plans, whether that's succession planning, trimming overhead, deeper profit margins, or significantly expand supply chain networks. Investors are likely to take note and businesses will need to work resiliency metrics into their valuations.

The world is undoubtedly changing before our very eyes. And

these are just a few examples of how we think the future of work will never be the same again.

Paper & Tape in the Age of COVID-19

“Paper and packaging… how life unfolds.”

The clever slogan from the Paper And Packaging Board certainly has new meaning in the wake of COVID-19. Here’s how a predominantly North American industry is pivoting to meet demand.

Paper, Corrugate & Cardboard Rise to the Occasion

“Most people don’t think about the important role that packaging plays except during a crisis like this. Aside from protecting crucial healthcare supplies and facilitating shipment, the eCommerce we are all totally dependent on now wouldn’t be possible without sturdy, reliable packaging.” That’s according to Bill Drake, a well-respected industry

analyst and President of B2B Industry Packaging.

For our company, packaging, and more specifically corrugate cardboard, is one of the main industries we serve. Indeed, the world's leading corrugators and paper mills trust us with their adhesive application needs. Double-sided splicing tapes, flat-back tabbing tapes and polypropylene tear tapes are all used in the paper manufacturing process to make everything from shipping boxes to food containers to tissues.

"Corrugated cardboard packaging is the backbone of the American supply chain," says Fibre Box Association President and CEO Dennis Colley. "As COVID-19 changes our daily lives, we want to assure consumers that the box industry is continuing to operate and to deliver needed packaging to our customers who supply grocery stores, pharmacies, doctor's offices and hospitals with food and medical supplies to keep us all healthy and safe."

As manufacturers of corrugated cardboard boxes work to keep transport packaging, so are we. Risa Edelstein, VP Marketing, says, "We're receiving a deluge of communication from our suppliers making sure that we know we are part of essential services, and we are rapidly pivoting to meet those needs. That includes implementing new protocols for our distribution center and warehouse as well as managing an increase in production and delivery. Our reps always said that tape is not important until you do not have it because it could shut an entire mill down!"

However, like other small businesses, ECHOtape has

transitioned many of its non-warehouse teams to work from home. “We have a responsibility to meet our customers’ needs, but our first priority was to ensure the safety and health of our employees. That said, we are dedicated to continuing to operate under the guidelines of the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Public Health Agency of *Canada,* and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to ensure products continue to flow to market.”

That’s not been an easy task considering ECHOtape’s uniquely Canadian and U.S. business model. “It’s a challenge for most businesses to keeping track of the daily changes affecting business continuity, let alone 50 states and 10 Canadian Provinces, each with different regulations. And yet our team has been able to pivot and redirect itself, not missing a beat. What a testament to ECHOtape’s incredible employees!” says Edelstein.

To Disinfect or Not? Handling Packaging During COVID-19

Obviously, the packages you order on the Internet or local delivery services aren’t exactly sterile. They’ve each likely been touched by multiple people—the person who put your food or item in the package, the person who loaded it onto a truck, the person who hands you your bag or box, and so on. How careful should you be?

Although The CDC's advice on protecting yourself during COVID-19 does not include disinfecting packages, its general advice stands: Wash your hands frequently and avoid close contact with people. However, erring on the side of caution isn't wrong. Consider disposing outer packaging outside of your home and wash your hands immediately after handling.

When it comes to food, the same advice stands. Donald W Schaffner is a food microbiologist and professor at Rutgers University. He told CNN: "Right now there's no evidence that [the virus is] spread through food. There's no evidence that it's spread through food packaging. That doesn't mean that we might not learn new evidence tomorrow that would change our thoughts on that, but right now that's what we believe," Schaffner said.

That said, there's no harm in throwing away nonessential outer packaging (cereal boxes, meat trays) or in wiping down cans and jars with an approved disinfectant if it puts your mind at ease. Alternatively, you could set aside non-perishable groceries for a few days before using them, since the information available now suggests that the virus can't be detected on plastic or stainless steel surfaces for more than three days.

Aside from washing your hands with soap and water, before beginning any food preparation you should sanitize sinks and counters using one of the approved disinfectants.

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What's Next? Toilet Paper & Demand Shock

Toilet paper has become the poster child of pandemic, and no one is more surprised than the tissue paper industry itself.

Companies that help supply these everyday paper products are rapidly pivoting to meet consumer demand. But when will shelves be restocked? No one seems to know – not the stores, not the suppliers, and certainly consumers.

Here's why: Most paper mills already operate manufacturing facilities 24 hours, 7 days a week. It's not like there's an idle machine that can be cranked up to increase production, let alone while adhering to stricter CDC and Canadian Health guidelines.

The American Forest & Paper Association, an industry group representing paper product makers, noted the industry is working hard to respond to the sudden spike in demand.

"Rest assured, tissue products continue to be produced and shipped – just as they are 52 weeks each year as part of a global market," AF&PA's CEO Heidi Brock said in a statement.

Georgia Pacific, the maker of Angel Soft and Quilted Northern, told CNN that toilet paper orders from retailers nearly doubled. The company managed to ship out 20% more than its

normal capacity. Meanwhile, Procter & Gamble transitioned production to prioritize their bestselling sizes to maximize the amount of product shipped to retailers. Other suppliers are shifting manufacturing away from similar non-essential products (napkins, for example) to make more room for toilet paper production.

However, there's another big concern looming: demand shock. Consumers who stockpile toilet paper now could eventually hurt manufacturers' sales down the road, leaving a surplus of product to strain the system yet again.

It's a concern we share at ECHOtape. Edelstein says, "Sales for adhesive products in a variety of industries, not just corrugate or paper mills, have increased. An uptick we are grateful for in an economy where small business are quickly shuttering. However, as we pass through the peak of pandemic, and life eventually returns to normal, will orders dry up? We're creating a contingency plan, but like the rest of the U.S. and Canada, only time will tell. We're all in this together."

Read more about ECHOtape's response to COVID-19 here.