HOW COMPANIES ARE USING TECHNOLOGY TO STAY ON COURSE DURING THE PANDEMIC

ELITE EXTRA™

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An industry analysis exploring how businesses are navigating uncertainty to stay strong.

Worldwide shutdowns in March of this year left economies reeling, with mass uncertainty about what would happen as the COVID-19 pandemic began to shake the foundation of our world. In the months that have followed, we have begun to evolve a new way of doing business that has more flexibility than before, and consumer business experts believe that many of the practices we are now establishing will become permanent.

The internal processes of many businesses changed very suddenly, with companies moving to more remote work, minimal staffing in the physical building at any given time, and generally doing more work with fewer employees. Businesses have implemented more stringent cleaning practices with protocols in place in the event of an employee with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. Managers and employees continue to master the new technology required to work from home, and they are learning how to navigate this transmuted workplace environment.

In many ways, businesses are finding their "sea-legs". Additional and surprising waves may come upon them at any time, but they are learning to navigate these new and turbulent waters. Two of the biggest challenges that remain involve staffing, and how to keep customers buying - even if they aren't physically present at a store.

Consumer habits are also more unsettled. With the pandemic fear keeping consumers out of restaurants and other stores, delivery and curbside services have skyrocketed. It comes as no surprise that off-premises food purchasing increased by 10% in the second quarter of 2020, according to Forbes.

Consumers are also more cautious about their purchases and are expressing lower trust in corporations than in prior years. Businesses are challenged to provide better goods and services as consumers evaluate their purchases more fully before committing. Buyers will also continue to expect a wider variety of options to procure the products they do purchase. Curbside pick-ups, contact-free sales, and home deliveries will likely continue to be asked for in all industries.

## OFF-PREMISES FOOD PURCHASING INCREASED BY 10%
in the second quarter of 2020

As companies add delivery services to their repertoire, advanced dispatching software will be key in accomplishing those goals efficiently. Optimized delivery routes mean that businesses can get more done day-to-day. There are many features of dispatching technologies that help to provide the same level of customer service with the reduced staff that has become the norm.

In-depth Industry Analysis

Elite EXTRA was interested in learning more about how users have been impacted by recent events, so the team surveyed 50 individuals who are new or longtime users of the Elite EXTRA platform. This advanced dispatching software company serves more than 30 different industries, with the bulk being Automotive. Many users were considered "essential businesses" and continued to operate through the shut-downs. All Elite EXTRA users were asked to respond to a variety of multiple-choice and open-ended questions to share their views of the industry as a whole. The 50 respondents are a representative sample of Elite EXTRA users with varied experience levels and industry knowledge. The survey questions focused on delivery services, and how they have been impacted by recent events.

No businesses have been untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, only 11.5 percent of users reported a high level of disruption in their day-to-day business. Approximately 30 percent of users reported little to no change to their expected revenue, while another 30 percent expect a decline of 25 percent or less.

COVID Related Change
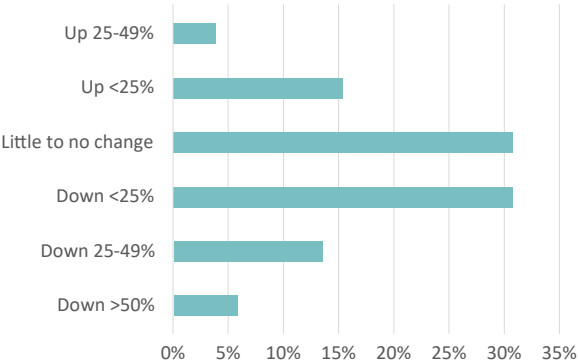
However, despite the declines, the users expressed a positive outlook for the coming months, with 28.8 percent anticipating business as usual, and 59.6 percent of users feeling somewhat or extremely positive about business in the coming months. When asked, 68 percent of users indicated that Elite EXTRA has been moderately to extremely useful in helping to navigate current challenges.

Overall Outlook
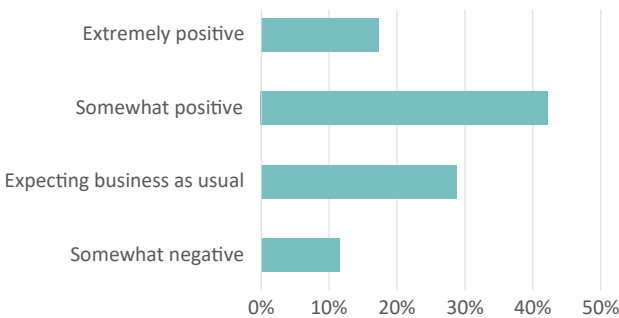
Advanced Dispatching
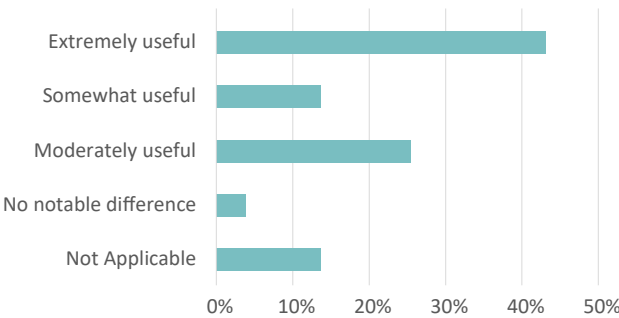
Users were also asked about what other resources were helping support their business and many cited improved communication amongst staff, as well as the Elite EXTRA platform as being highly beneficial. Specific benefits indicated were routes being built automatically, improved knowledge of drivers' locations, and monitoring deliveries to ensure they will be delivered on time.

The challenges that face these businesses are no different than other industries. Supply chains have been disrupted or broken and supplies are harder to acquire. Industries that provide delivery services were already experiencing driver shortages in 2019, and the pandemic has heightened that concern. Additionally, users indicated that they are struggling to get employees to return to work, as many are concerned about their and their families' health. Staffing was the most commonly cited concern regarding business operations.
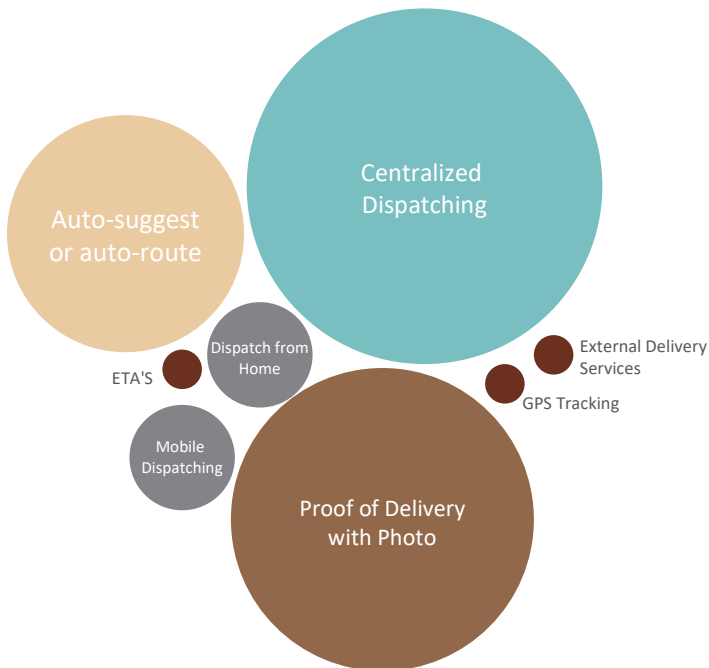
Quotes from Elite EXTRA Users

"Technical support is good, always helpful and quick to respond." - Erika

"You do a wonderful job any time we need you" - Suzanne

"Elite EXTRA's ability to monitor on time deliveries [has been helpful]" - Steve

How Elite EXTRA helps

Utilizing tools like advanced dispatching software can help to support a business's operational resilience by providing flexibility in their daily operations. The graph displays the features that users found to be most helpful.

Auto-suggest or auto-route

Centralized Dispatching

ETA'S

Dispatch from Home

External Delivery Services

GPS Tracking

Mobile Dispatching

Proof of Delivery with Photo

Centralized Dispatching.

As staffing concerns are at the forefront, centralized dispatching for deliveries helps to alleviate the problem. A single dispatcher can manage many drivers and even multiple locations. All information regarding deliveries is held in one centralized place, which helps to improve efficiency and communication.

Proof of Delivery with Photo

More customers are asking for contact-free deliveries, and using a photograph as proof of delivery helps to solve some of the problems created by not handing a package directly to a staff member. Photographs show where a package was delivered, and the condition it was in upon delivery. This provides peace-of-mind to the recipient and the provider.

Auto-suggest or Auto-route

What do you do if there is no dispatcher to create routes? Have them create themselves, of course. Today's technologies allow for routes to be built based on many different criteria, which speeds and simplifies the process of manifesting and dispatching routes for drivers. These routes are optimized to cover the shortest distance in the fastest time, allowing drivers to accomplish more every day.

Dispatch from Home

With limits on the number of people who can be in a building at any given time, having the option to move at least one of those people out of the office can make a difference. Since many advanced dispatching platforms are Cloud-based, a dispatcher can log-on from their home and still efficiently manage their tasks for the day.

Mobile Dispatching

Drivers can even build their own delivery routes on mobile devices by scanning invoices or packages. This is a great option for companies who lack designated dispatchers, are looking for solutions during times of social distancing, or are simply trying to free up staff to focus on other priorities. Since businesses are already shorthanded, this flexibility is highly valuable.

While there are no cure-alls or quick-fix solutions, the right tools can go a long way toward supporting business and helping to pioneer the way that business will function in the future. We are living in the digital age, and business is forever changed. Gone are the days of whiteboards to plan routes, and customers needing to come into a store to make a purchase. Operational resilience requires flexibility on the part of the business, as well as any partners they are working with to accomplish their goals.