

A holiday miracle? Stores try to cut down on long lines

22 November 2018, by Joseph Pisani And Anne D'innocenzio



"I'm all about quick and convenient," says Carolyn Sarpy, who paid for a toy basketball hoop on a mobile [device](#) issued to a [worker](#) at a Walmart store in Houston. Sarpy says she "will turn around and walk out" of a store if she sees long lines.

Walmart says workers will stand in the busiest sections of stores, ready to swipe customer credit cards when they are ready to pay. To make them easier to find, workers wear yellow sashes that say, "Check out with me."

The world's largest retailer first tested the [service](#) in the spring at more than 350 stores in its lawn and garden centers. It fared well, Walmart says, and expanded the program for the holiday season.

In this Nov. 9, 2018, photo, Walmart associate Shanay Bishop, left, checks out customer Carolyn Sarpy on the sales floor as part of the "Check Out With Me" program at a Walmart Supercenter in Houston. Walmart, Target and other large retailers are sending workers throughout their stores to check customers out with mobile devices. And at Macy's, shoppers can scan and pay for items on their own smartphones. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)



Retailers will once again offer big deals and early hours to lure shoppers into their stores for the start of the holiday season. But they'll also try to get shoppers out of their stores faster than ever by minimizing the thing they hate most: long lines.

Walmart, Target and other large [retailers](#) are sending workers throughout their stores to check out customers with [mobile devices](#). And at Macy's, shoppers can scan and pay for items on their own smartphones.

Retailers hope the changes will make [in-store](#) shopping less of a hassle. Long lines can irritate shoppers, who may leave the store empty handed and spend their money elsewhere, or go online.

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Retailers are trying to catch up to technology

giants. Apple, for example, has let those buying iPhones, laptops and other gadgets in its stores to pay on mobile devices issued to workers. And Amazon has been rolling out cashier-less convenience stores in San Francisco, Chicago and Seattle.

Barbara Kahn, a marketing professor at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, says shoppers know the technology is out there for faster shopping. "That makes them even more impatient," she says.

The true test of their success will be whether retailers can handle the big crowds who are expected to turn out for Black Friday weekend. The day after Thanksgiving is expected to be the busiest shopping day this year, according to retail analytics company ShopperTrak. The Saturday after Thanksgiving also ranks in the top 10.

"The biggest pain point on Black Friday is standing in line," says Jason Goldberg, senior vice president of commerce and content practice at consulting group SapientRazorfish.

J.C. Penney, which has been offering mobile checkout for years, says it sent an additional 6,000 mobile devices to stores this year so workers can check shoppers out quicker, like when lines get long on Black Friday. Other stores are testing it for the first time: Kohl's says iPad-wielding workers will roam 160 of its more than 1,100 stores.

Macy's, which announced its program in May, says customers need to use its mobile app to scan price tags and pay. After that, they have to go to a mobile checkout express line and show the app to a worker, who then removes security tags from clothing.

Target's mobile checkout program, which is being rolled out to all its 1,800 stores, is similar to Walmart's. Target says that at its electronics area, where there are usually two cash registers, four workers will be sent with handheld devices to help ring up customers buying TVs, video games and other devices.

"This is about servicing the guest however they want and as quickly as they want," says John Mulligan, Target's chief operating officer.



In this Friday, Nov. 16, 2018, photo a Target employee looks at a scanning device, which employees can use to easily check out single items for customers away from the check-out lines at a Target store in Edison, N.J. Walmart, Target and other large retailers are sending workers throughout their stores to check out customers with mobile devices. And at Macy's, shoppers can scan and pay for items on their own smartphones. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)



In this Nov. 9, 2018, file photo, Walmart associate Shanay Bishop, left, checks out customer Carolyn Sarpy on the sales floor as part of the "Check Out With Me" program at a Walmart Supercenter in Houston. Walmart, Target and other large retailers are sending workers throughout their stores to check customers out with mobile devices. And at Macy's, shoppers can scan and pay for items on their own smartphones. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip, File)



In this Nov. 9, 2018, file photo Walmart associates stock a frozen meat section at a Walmart Supercenter in Houston. Retailers will once again offer big deals and early hours to lure shoppers into their stores for the start of the holiday season. But they'll also try to get shoppers out of their stores faster than ever by minimizing the thing they hate most: long lines. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip, File)



This Nov. 9, 2018, photo shows a checkout scanner at a Walmart Supercenter in Houston. Retailers will once again offer big deals and early hours to lure shoppers into their stores for the start of the holiday season. But they'll also try to get shoppers out of their stores faster than ever by minimizing the thing they hate most: long lines. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)



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In this Nov. 9, 2018, photo Walmart associate Javid Vohar, right, checks out customers at a Walmart Supercenter in Houston. Retailers will once again offer big deals and early hours to lure shoppers into their stores for the start of the holiday season. But they'll also try to get shoppers out of their stores faster than ever by minimizing the thing they hate most: long lines. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

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