

RETAIL

## US department store chain Neiman Marcus officially launches new digital hub for personalized services

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*Neiman Marcus has introduced contactless curbside pickup as part of its overall Your Neiman's service. Image credit: Neiman Marcus*

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

U.S. department store chain Neiman Marcus has introduced a new online location for customers to access a variety of services as the COVID-19 pandemic has altered store-visit behavior.

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The Irving, TX-based company's Your Neiman's digital hub acknowledges shopper discomfort with in-store visits by offering personalization elements online that were previously the province of bricks-and-mortar.

"The world is changing, and we're all adjusting our habits to accommodate the new normal," said David Goubert, president and chief customer officer of Neiman Marcus Group, in a statement.

"Our customers look to Neiman's to curate the key styles of the season, find their perfect outfits, and help them feel their best," he said.

"The comfort and safety of our customers and associates are our utmost priority. We've introduced innovative ways to be here for them, now in more ways than ever."

**Neiman Marcus** is part of the Neiman Marcus Group that includes New York department store Bergdorf Goodman and the Horchow catalog business.

The parent company is currently in Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceedings, making it one of the two casualties in the U.S. department store space along with J.C. Penney whose precarious financial position was tipped over the edge by the COVID-19 lockdowns nationwide.

Online or flatline

Accelerating digital offerings that mimic the personalized, luxury experience is key for department stores' survival. Neiman Marcus like its peers Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom and Bloomingdale's gets that, resulting in a slew of digital enhancements such as Your Neiman's over the past three months.

**Your Neiman's** will let customers make a personal appointment in-store, opt for curbside pickup, learn about new trends and designers during virtual events and engage via video with a style advisor.

Take the stylist match function, for example. Previously, not all customers were comfortable accessing this service. Now, with Your Neiman's, shoppers can have the perks of a personal stylist without cost, obligation or the need to come to a store.

Customers can get matched with a stylist by answering a few questions about their lifestyle, personal style and needs at [www.neimanmarcus.com/stylistmatch](http://www.neimanmarcus.com/stylistmatch).

Customers are then individually matched with a stylist based on their preferences. The stylist then supports the customer with complimentary styling services, through text, email, video chat or in person.

With virtual experiences, Neiman Marcus adapted in-store events to virtual engagements.

From cooking demonstrations and designer presentations to Fashionphile authentication sessions, Neiman Marcus' virtual events offer a more interactive way to discover luxury, fashion, and the latest trends, the company said.

Customers can explore the upcoming event schedule and RSVP for events at [www.neimanmarcus.com/virtualevents](http://www.neimanmarcus.com/virtualevents).



*A Neiman Marcus style advisor communicating with his client via mobile video to show merchandise up close. Image credit: Neiman Marcus*

### Make the connection

Remote assistance was born of a necessity in March as the COVID-19 lockdowns kicked in. Neiman Marcus introduced a proprietary tool, NM Connect, to let stylists deliver a store-like experience even when stores were not open.

"NM Connect has transformed the way sales associates can communicate with their clients," said Katie Mullen, chief digital officer of Neiman Marcus Group, in a statement.

"The platform was designed to inspire clients, from offering personalized look books, to completing transactions remotely and instantly," she said.

"With the launch of digital stylists and remote selling capabilities, we are enabling our associates to engage with and support customers anytime, anywhere."

In fact, NM Connect has found a heartening measure of acceptance from both Neiman Marcus clients and employees.

So far, 4,900 associates, stylists and managers across Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman are using digital tools to continue to engage with customers.

Sales associates across the two department store brands have used the Connect platform to engage with clients, completing more than 1.5 million engagements via text messages, email, phone and video calls since the launch.

Best affirmation of all is the result.

Over three months, customers have bought goods worth more than \$60 million through NM Connect, Neiman Marcus claimed.



*A one-on-one appointment with a Neiman Marcus style advisor. Image credit: Neiman Marcus*

Check, check

Now, as stores begin to reopen across the U.S. since June, the retailer has instituted a range of measures to keep shoppers and employees safe from infections.

The focus now is on repeated disinfection of high-use and frequently touched areas.

Staff is subject to temperature checks upon arrival to the store.

Additionally, all associates and customers are required to wear face coverings while in the store, the company said.

Even the selling process has evolved.

Jewelry and accessories are disinfected before and after try-on and clothes are steamed after trying on.

The retailer has also temporarily discontinued all beauty services. It is only offering single-use product testers and applicators.

If those measures do not quell shopper concerns, then Neiman Marcus has added the option of curbside pickup and personal appointments through <https://stores.neimanmarcus.com/bookings> or the style advisor.

Even gift cards are offered for curbside pickup for those not sure of what to buy for family or friends.

"While we're opening another 13 stores to full traffic this week, we are pleased to continue to offer a full range of in-

store shopping options, including curbside and appointments, for those who want a more personal experience," Mr. Goubert said.

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