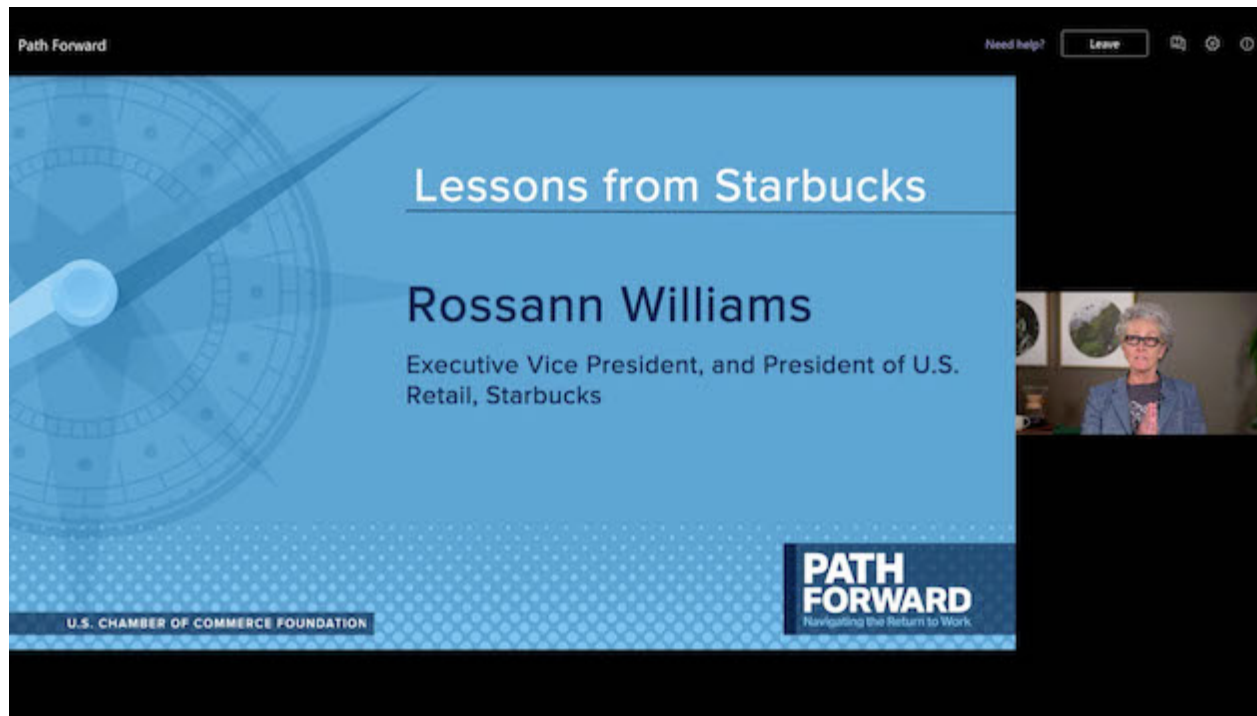


# Starbucks, IBM, and Dow Share What They've Learned During the Pandemic



Businesses have had to quickly adjust to new ways of working during the pandemic to ensure customers and employees are safe while maintaining business operations. In today's episode of Path Forward, U.S. Chamber President Suzanne Clark talked with three business leaders about how their companies have adapted to COVID-19.

One challenge Clark noted is a "patchwork of different orders and different ordinance and different rules" on wearing masks. It "has made it really hard for employees and customers to feel safe, which has a direct impact on consumer confidence and the economy."

We need to "come together with consistent rules for public health and economic health," added Clark.

Rossann Williams, Starbucks' Executive Vice President and President of U.S. Retail, addressed the mask issue. Starting Wednesday, Starbucks will require that all customers in the U.S. wear a facial covering. The intent is to "create the safest environment for our customers and partners," said Williams. "If, in fact, we know that the science tells us that wearing a facial covering protects other people from potentially spreading the coronavirus, then in our stores we're wearing a mask to protect you our customers, and we're going to ask our customers to wear a mask to respect our partners."

Starbucks is training their employees "to respectfully request that the customer has to have a facial covering if they want to come into our store." The company will offer customers a facial covering if they don't have one or have them wait outside for their order.

IBM is employing technology and data-driven decision-making during the pandemic. For example, the company is using WIFI signals at work sites to “understand in an anonymized fashion the relative density that is happening” there, said Dario Gil, Director of IBM Research. This helps determine how quickly people can return to work. Also, if someone is exposed to the virus, the technology can help determine who else might have been exposed. It’s “an assisted form of contact tracing,” explained Gil.

Dow hasn’t slowed down. The company has “14,000 employees going to work in their regular workplace around the world,” said Louis Vega, President, Dow North America. At the same time, thousands of other employees are working from home. Digital tools became critical. “We sent everyone home on a Friday, and life was at normal as far as efficiently of delivering work product by Monday,” said Vega. “It’s because our company has invested in tools that allow us to work collaboratively no matter where we are in the world.”

No single company has all the answers for facing this pandemic. Conversations among businesses leaders is critical. “As we listen and learn from others, we’re able to tailor those [lessons] that meet our needs,” said Vega.

Video of the event will be available on the [U.S. Chamber Foundation website](#) .