



COLLECTIVE
ALTERNATIVE

MARKETING // ADVERTISING // PUBLIC RELATIONS

HOW TO MARKET DURING A PANDEMIC

Week 3: Defining Your Brand

You don't get a second chance to make a first impression, and nothing could be more true for your company's brand. How a potential customer feels about your product or service can be judged in an instant. That's why making sure your brand is in line with your company's mission and values is critical.

Craft your brand story based on your mission and values

Sounds simple, right? But translating how you talk about your company in person to a website, press release or social media post isn't always easy. In fact, it can be incredibly difficult.

People buy products or services from you because they a) have to or b) believe in your "why."

Your "why" can drive business because it makes customers feel connected to you with a larger purpose – it's more than just a sale.

The answer could be right in front of you.

WHAT IS YOUR “WHY”?

- » Why did you originally start your business?
- » Does your business operate by a set of values that is exclusive to your customer and/or employees?
- » What is your unique value proposition in the marketplace?

Answer the above questions, and you will be well on your way to crafting your brand’s story.

Customers want to know their purchase supports something greater than themselves, even if it’s a necessity. The ability to tap into that feeling to make a customer a loyal advocate for your brand is priceless.

Review your website messaging.

Does it display your distinctive brand voice and what your brand is all about?

Once you’ve found your “why”, you can start digging into how others see your business. A good place to start is the “about us” page on your website.

Customers will see right through a generic “this is who we are.” If you are not saying what makes you different, you’re just like everyone else. Your business story is unique, you hired your employees because they fit your culture, so why doesn’t your website reflect that?

Let’s use HVAC as an example. This is a very competitive industry. If your “about us” page just contains generic information about the company and pictures of your technicians, why should a customer be invested in letting you in their home? The more a customer feels they can connect and know you, the more likely they are to use your services or purchase your product.

So, how do you bump up the content?

Why are you in the HVAC business? I would assume it’s because you really care about people and providing them comfort. If that’s not conveyed in your genuine story, customers will continue searching for the HVAC company with the better deal or a better story.

Making your employees seem like “one of us” is also a great starting point. Their website bios should be warm and inviting, and even contain fun facts if appropriate. Is it useful to know my HVAC technician has been to 50 country music concerts? Probably not, but it does make me feel like I know them, and they won’t feel like such a stranger when I meet them for the first time and invite them into my home.

Having a strong connection and a distinctive brand can lead to your most valuable resource: word of mouth referrals. You can’t buy advertising that is more effective than a friend or family recommendation.

AUDIT YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES

When was the last time you looked at your social media profiles as a whole, not just to post an update?

- » Do your logos match across platforms and your website?
- » Is your brand's voice consistent?
- » Do the pictures and images you share fit with your brand?

If your answer was "no" to any of the above, it's time for a social media audit. First, make all logos and images uniform. Millennial buyers are more likely to check out social media platforms before a company website, so if the social pages aren't up to standard potential customers could bounce to your competitor. Your logos across platforms should also match so your brand becomes recognizable as consumers research your company from different platforms.

Social media has the reputation that it has to be fun to get attention. If your business isn't all fun and games, your social media shouldn't be either. For example, if you post industry news on your blog, sharing an excerpt of a recent post on social media, with a link back to your website to read the full article, might work well and draw engagement from your followers. Provide value that is easily digestible and sharable, and your company can become one to turn to for news and advice.

The No. 1 rule of social media: If you're not going to post on the page, regularly respond to comments or engage with the platform, don't set one up.

- » Just having a social media account isn't enough, it needs to be active to work for you.
- » You do not need to be on every social media platform. Where you need to be seen depends on where your audience is.
- » Know your audience. Who is on social media and what platforms are they using most? This is a [helpful guide](#) that breaks down platform demographics and can help you determine where you'll best reach your target audience.

63%
of customers

expect companies to offer customer service via their social media channels, and 90% of social media users have already used social media as a way to communicate with a brand or business.

71%
of consumers

who have had a good social media service experience with a brand are likely to recommend it to others.

Visual Content is
40 times
more

likely to get shared on social media than other types of content.

95%
of online adults

aged 18-34 are most likely to follow a brand via social networking

SOURCE

Build a relationship with the media by sending concise pitches about your brand and services

Have a cool new product? Expanding your services? Is YOUR story something that needs to be seen or heard? If so, writing and submitting a press release can be one of the most effective avenues to share your brand.

You don't want to overwhelm the media with pitches that just get deleted and thrown in the trash. Before you send a press release, ask yourself these questions:

- » Have I seen a story like this in the newspaper or on the news before?
- » What value does your story bring to the media? Is it a chance to educate consumers?
- » If someone from the media contacts me, am I willing and prepared to be interviewed at the drop of a hat?

The more concise a press release is, the more likely it is to get read. [Download our free press release template here.](#)

There is an art to pitching press releases, and many times the value of contacting a marketing agency to proofread your press release and send it to their contacts in the media is beneficial. Don't be afraid to reach out and ask for help. You're an expert in your arena, and an agency is an expert in theirs. Collaborating on your messaging could help you get the coverage you desire.

YOUR BRAND

Your brand is more than your logo, your social media pages, your employees or a press release. Your brand elicits a feeling, and if one of the above does not match, your brand suffers. Completing a thorough brand audit every few years can be just the tune-up your business needs. It's also a chance for your company to come together and collaborate, strengthening your team in the process.

Day to day you work IN your business, but your business can grow and flourish when you begin to work ON it. That can start with just a few simple changes or ideas to position your company as the obvious best choice for consumers.

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