



COLLECTIVE
ALTERNATIVE

MARKETING // ADVERTISING // PUBLIC RELATIONS

HOW TO MARKET DURING A PANDEMIC

A SMALL BUSINESS GUIDE FOR STAYING AFLOAT

MARKETING STRATEGY

Think through your current advertising and evaluate whether you should suspend your campaign or alter your ad message. For example, have you added a delivery service or online chat option? These types of services might encourage one to choose your service for flexibility and safety. Increasing your ad spend to communicate this option to the consumer is key. Other businesses might consider altering their overall strategy to cut back on ad spend during this time and go more of a grass roots approach.

With market uncertainty, it's important to maintain your voice. Keep an impression baseline through thoughtful social media posts and other opportunities to communicate with your customers. For example, let your customers know what you're doing to protect their safety, health and interests during this time.

If your business does sell some of the 'hot ticket' items that have been flying off the shelves, make sure you are not still advertising products that may be out of stock.

NOW IS THE TIME

If your business has slowed or you find you have extra time on your hands you may not normally, now is the time to knock some of those marketing tasks off your list. For example, record a video talking about your business or what makes your product or service unique. Or take some time to clean up your distribution list.

EXPANDING YOUR SERVICES

Should you consider expanding or adding services? Is there something you can provide to make someone's quarantine experience more bearable? Think through an e-commerce position, door-to-door delivery or online communications. Stay relevant.

THINK BEYOND TODAY

The human nature is strong and we will band together during this time. When this passes, you will want to recover time and sales lost. How are you going to do that? Consider what you can do today to set yourself up for success later.

SALES

Now is not the time to hide from your customers. It's important to stay connected, for both you and your customers, to the reality that this too shall pass and business will return. Here are some tips to keep your sales pipeline moving in the right direction.

- » Give your clients, customers or prospects the option to do video conferences or in person meetings – whichever their preference.
- » If you are attending in-person meetings, here are some best practices:
 - Do not give out hugs or handshakes, everybody will understand and appreciate it
 - Bring hand sanitizer, use it after you leave and/or when needed
 - If you use a laptop, wipe it down once you leave
 - Wash your hands at your first convenience

Prefer an in-person meeting, but need to stay put? Try Virtual Conferences.

Below are some affordable, month-to-month options:

- Zoom
- Uber Conference
- GoToMeeting
- Join.me

Be there for your customers and clients when they need you the most. Check in on them. Find out how they are handling things and give them an opportunity to vent some personal stress they may be experiencing during this time.

PR/COMMUNICATIONS

BUSINESS TO CONSUMER (B2C)

If you are a B2C business, consumers need confidence more than ever right now. Send an email to your client list and post a note in your store to ensure your customers that you are doing everything you can to keep them safe. You can also offer customers free shipping to encourage them to support your business online, if they prefer not to be out and about. If you provide a service, reassure them that your team is staying diligent when it comes to washing hands and sanitizing equipment, and are encouraged to stay home if they are sick. If customers do not feel comfortable visiting your space or having you in their home to provide a service, consider allowing them to reschedule or receive credit to use at a future date.

Each business' services, products and target audience vary, so companies will need to provide specifics as to how they are being proactive and accommodating to their consumers' individual needs.

Sample Email for a B2C

At ___ our top priority is you.

In times like these, our dedication to customer service will not waver. Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, effective immediately, we have made the following changes to _____. While we always keep our space clean and tidy, we are changing our cleaning procedure to cleaning hard surfaces twice per day and hand sanitizer is available for use in store.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to any employee or myself if you have any questions or concerns. We appreciate your business.

For more information about COVID-19 please see the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

NOTE: If you are a restaurant, we recommend summarizing your usual cleaning procedure to help consumers understand that you take their health very seriously every visit, and that you are implementing more strict cleaning guidelines in light of COVID-19.

BUSINESS TO BUSINESS (B2B)

If you are a B2B business, your clients need to be assured that production / service will not be impacted and that you are still open for business as usual. This may mean meetings that normally take place in person, will be moved to virtual meetings. Or, if your employees can work virtually, you offer that option and let clients know that you are being proactive to protect your employees.

Let your business partners know that you are taking the extra steps to ensure employees are washing hands, sanitizing equipment and staying home if they are sick to provide the best products and service.

Each business' services, products and clients vary, so it's important for organizations to provide specifics as to how they are being proactive and accommodating to their clients' needs during this time.

Sample Email for a B2B

At ___ our top priority is serving you. In times like these, our dedication to customer service will not waiver.

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we are taking steps to both protect you as well as our employees. If you are interested, we would like to offer virtual meetings or phone calls to conduct business. We are still happy to meet in person, and in doing so will follow all guidelines set by the CDC.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns. We appreciate your business.

For more information about COVID-19 please see the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

SOCIAL MEDIA

With the national emergency we are experiencing with coronavirus (COVID-19), it's more important than ever to ease our customers minds. As a small business owner, you have a unique opportunity to be a leader in your local community, to provide peace of mind, relief and transparency in times of fear and uncertainty.

When used correctly, your business' social media platforms can be a fantastic tool to communicate how your business is being proactive, share up-to-date, reliable resources on COVID-19 and reassure them that you care for their safety and well-being.

Sample Social Media Posts

1. If you are a Business to Consumer (B2C) business, share how you are aware of what is happening and what steps you are taking to ensure a safe shopping experience or service.

Example: Our top priority is the health and safety of our employees and YOU. We've taken the extra steps to ensure you can [shop/be served/etc.] with confidence. For more information, or to contact us with any questions or concerns, visit [website link].

COMPANY NAME'S COVID-19 PREVENTION GUIDELINES

-  **ENCOURAGING EMPLOYEES TO STAY HOME IF THEY ARE SICK OR MAY BE AT RISK**
-  **ROUTINELY DISINFECTING ALL COUNTERS, SHELVES, HANDLES, EQUIPMENT AND OTHER SPACES**
-  **ENSURING ALL EMPLOYEES THOROUGHLY WASH HANDS REGULARLY**
-  **CLOSELY FOLLOWING THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL'S (CDC) GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

*include a graphic of some of the guidelines/practices you've implemented. Platforms like Canva (<https://www.canva.com/>) are easy-to-use and free.

2. Share how your customers have alternative options when it comes to receiving their products or services.

Product Example: We are here for you!

However, if you are not feeling well, or prefer not to visit us in-store, feel free to browse and shop online at [insert web link] and receive FREE shipping on us. Our team is also available by phone at [insert phone number] or [email] to assist you.



Service Example: We are here for you!

However, if you are not feeling well or prefer not to visit us at this time, we would be happy to reschedule your service or provide a credit for you to use at a later date. Your comfort and safety are of the utmost importance to us! Contact us today to learn more.

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

When sharing news or information regarding COVID-19, be sure it is from a factual, trusted source. Do not share rumors or misleading information.

- » If you update policies, business hours or have other critical information, be sure to share it immediately.
 - Continue to remind customers that you are following CDC/local agency agencies accordingly.
- » Stay on brand. Look at what other companies are implementing for ideas, but make sure you do what is right and what makes sense for your audience.
- » This is not a time to capitalize on your customer's fear.
 - Make the necessary arrangements you want to allow your clients to continue to shop/use your service, but don't use this as a way to exploit or take advantage of them at a vulnerable time.
- » Monitor comments and engage regularly. Your customers may have questions about your hours, cleaning procedures, alternative shopping and service options, etc. Social media is a great tool to share information and also show your customer that you are listening to them and always available.

ONLINE

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

If Search Engine Optimization hasn't been a major focus of your marketing efforts, now is the time to jump on board. With an increasing number of people self-quarantining, the amount of people surfing the web is increasing as well.

Other Online Mediums to Consider:

- » YouTube
- » Podcasts
- » Blogs

If you've considered starting a blog or a podcast, now is a good time to create a small library of posts so you have some regularity of posts that can continue when business returns to normal.

GOOGLE

If your business hours have changed due to COVID-19 precautions, update your Google My Business page to keep your customers in the loop. While you're there, you can also post updates regarding any other special precautions you are taking or changes in your services or products offered.



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TO SCHEDULE YOUR FREE STRATEGY SESSION

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