



2020 Marketing How to bridge the COVID-19 period



When life gives you lemons ...

We all know how this saying goes on: “Make lemonade.”

But selling said lemonade isn't easy nowadays ...



When life gives you lemons ...

When everyone has been ordered to stay at home, who will go out to buy it? Maybe you're not even allowed to open your lemonade store anymore by the local government. And how will people know your lemonade even exists when there's no crowd to see your advertising?

Marketing managers and departments across the world are experiencing the same sudden and impactful shift because of the COVID-19 crisis. Many are asked to shut down everything to save costs, often without the opportunity to draw up a contingency plan.

These actions might be effective in the short term; they won't do much good for your organization and the (restabilization of the) overall economy in the long term.

Whether you need arguments to keep the marketing alive in your organization or are looking for a comprehensible checklist, [this short guide contains marketing suggestions and tips to jumpstart your contingency plan.](#)

top highlight 



Macro-level Marketing Tips

Supply & Overall Dependencies

Even if this crisis doesn't affect your business directly, it might hamper your suppliers and partners.

top highlight 

So before you make adjustments to your marketing efforts, research what areas are impacted most and which are still relatively intact.

Ticking the necessary boxes

With the COVID-19 crisis on everyone's mind, it's essential to act swiftly and thoroughly. Even if you're still figuring things out internally, let your customer base know how you are -or will be- responding to the whole situation.

On the next page is a checklist of actions to be on top of things from a marketing perspective. If you can't do them all at once, remember it's better to take care of them later than not at all.



1

Have a small Corona or COVID-19 F.A.Q. section on your website. Like [Everlane](#).

2

Send out an email with clear and practical information on how your business will resume its activities. Start from a general template and customize it for customers, partners, suppliers, other stakeholders ...

3

Post a concise message on every communication channel and sticky it if you have the option.

4

Adjust opening hours on your website, Google profile and social media channels.

5

Go over your current and scheduled campaigns. Adjust where necessary or put them on hold for the time being.

How you communicate this information appropriately or how you adjust specific campaigns will be dealt with later on in this guide.



BossData

top highlight 

Time for a spring cleaning?

Business being slow is rarely a good thing, but in this unique case it just might open up opportunities to clean up your workflows, databases, etc. After all, changes are extremely high the competition is experiencing the same decline in activity as you are. So -if you're able to- **take the chance to refresh and enhance certain aspects of your marketing engine.**

These are examples of stuff you've been probably doing for a while but could be updated / looked at :

1

Clean up your email databases. You've been gathering data for years probably. Is it all stored nicely and universally?

2

Are there any 404's that you could redirect or have removed? Or maybe enhance your 404 page a bit?

3

Unsure about any sections of your website? Maybe time for some AB-testing?

4

Is your [Google Analytics](#) account set up properly?

5

Is your [goals & KPI framework](#) still working for you? Or are you measuring vanity metrics? Now is as good as time as any to reconsider your goals & targets.



Or how about exploring some undiscovered territory?

1

Set up that marketing automation tool you've been planning to do for so long.

2

Test out new waters: advertise on channels you have looked into before. E.g. Have you advertised on Bing?

3

Create content to distribute (freely). You have a lot more to share than you think.

4

Automate dashboarding and reporting to save time in the future. Get started with an example. [Download here.](#)

5

Find ways to simplify your campaign management, with scripts, for example.

6

Wondering how automation might help you? Try setting up feed-based campaigns. Not sure what those are? Get inspired and download [our 2019 winning use case with feed automation tool Channable.](#)

Chances are you're to go down a rabbit hole because there will always be something that needs improvement. So make a list, attach a level of urgency to the items and get busy!



Marketing Campaigns: Existing & New

Cut costs but find a balance

Obviously, when (potential) clients are restricted in their movements, the marketing budget allocation will follow suit and experience severe limitations.

A valid measure for sure, but it would be a mistake to shut down marketing spending completely.

As often is the case, the best way forward isn't black or white. It's a particular shade of grey.

On the next page, you'll find a couple of reasons why.



1

Customers: You still might have some left. Even if it's only 10 or 20% of your normal reach, wouldn't it be a shame to neglect them? These might just be your most loyal customers out there. Treat them as such.

2

Momentum: If you come to a complete halt, you will also have to go through a standing restart. A lot of industries will experience a sort of "level playing field" with a lot of opportunities for the taking. Keep your vehicle rolling, and you will have assured a head start against a lot of your competition.

3

Branding: Now is the time to identify and differentiate. Cash might be low, but time to think will increase and creativity has always been free. Re-do your USP exercise, update your buyer persona's, check if your values are still upholding, make inquiries about brand perception to see whether you're still in touch with your target demographic ...

4

Stock exchange-like opportunities: Competitors might decrease or completely shut down their ad-spendings. In turn, this allows you to acquire real estate that otherwise might've been off-limits for you. See what's out there and how you can use it to your advantage now that it's relatively cheap!



How to move and adjust stock

Because of the rapid increase in severity of the situation, many companies haven't been able to adjust accordingly fast enough. In terms of stock management, this could be quite a challenge.

Apart from the logistic side of things, you'll have to adapt and overcome the atypical circumstances with specific marketing efforts:

- 1 Try to get rid of assets that are expensive to stock first. Give out discounts to decrease the stock period.
- 2 Focus on advertising the stock that sells well through online channels. As people are staying home, the online availability of some items will increase in popularity.
- 3 Offer larger bundles & products with a longer shelf-life to accommodate the current needs.
- 4 Have special promotions in place of pre-ordering popular products. It gives you an idea and some guarantee on the amount to restock.
- 5 Create a bit more buzz for coupons or store credit vouchers. These are easy to gift online and might temporarily replace actual presents.



Retention and loyalty reign supreme

People are less prone to take risks during uncertain times. This means it'll be harder to draw in customers loyal to a competitor, but the opposite is true as well: You're less likely to lose a lot of your loyal customer base.

top highlight 

So instead of trying to enlarge your current pool of customers, it might be a better idea to solidify it.

Send out a distinct email that summarizes the actions your business is going to undertake and how they can still rely on you. Building trust and confidence in your brand has always been important. Now it has gotten to a point where it's absolutely vital, but also more feasible, in a way.

Just communicate honestly and professionally, let them feel valued and don't create any unnecessary FOMO or alike, or it will backfire.

Interested in learning more on loyalty marketing and how it could help your business? Sign up for our free 3 week video course. [Enroll here.](#)



top highlight 

What you shouldn't do ...

... is taking advantage of the situation and use it to self-promote.

Sounds pretty obvious, right? Yet some marketing departments will try and push the limits of the acceptable. It always happens. The motto "it's easier to ask for forgiveness than to get permission" is a popular saying in marketing-land but often leads to rather foolish decisions and damaging campaigns. Some examples:

1

McDonald's separated the arches of their logo as a reference to social distancing. They caught a lot of backlash with this move because it was clearly self-promotion and not a real form of support whatsoever. [More info here.](#)

2

The French "**Polette**", manufacturer of glasses, offered their customers free facemasks with the purchase of a pair of glasses. A move which left a bad taste because they were obviously trying to take advantage of the pandemic. [More info here.](#)

3

Coors, a brand of beer, prevented potential criticism by putting an ad on hold because the fear it might come across insensitive. The ad called "The Official Beer of Working Remotely" would probably be too topical to launch right now and the comedic nature might've not caught on. [More info here.](#)



top highlight 

What you shouldn't do ...

... is communicating messages that address or relate to the situation but actually have nothing to do with your business.

Repeating general public service announcements might seem like a good idea to show you care, but they'll come across as "an excuse to get noticed" rather fast, especially when you're the 3rd or 4th company that is reaching out to tell you you have to wash your hands and stay inside.

What people are most interested in, is how it will impact the service you provide and overall business that they've grown so accustomed to. List the changes, add some genuine, reassuring words and keep it concise. They will appreciate it way more.



Marketing Communication: Tone and type of content

Empathy is (still) your number one skill set

The COVID-19 crisis affects pretty much everyone. Yet, individual experiences range from mild inconveniences, to financial and social insecurity, to human suffering and even mortality.

So now, more than ever, it's imperative you put yourself in the shoes of a variety of personalities and find a balance in your messaging and tone of voice.

For example: When you talk about your business having a rough time, you might not get the compassion and understanding you were hoping for from someone who has a relative in extensive care.

But they still might need to do business with you at some point, so the least you can do is make it easy for them and provide them with all the information they'll need. Rather than explaining how the crisis has affected you, concentrate on how it has affected your audience and convey what you will do to support them and limit inconveniences.

top highlight 



Come forward as the people, not the brand

Now that human interaction is limited, it is more valuable than ever at the same time. Not only in everyday life but in your marketing communication as well.

If you have always communicated as an organisation and never as the individual behind it, it might be a "good" time to do so. A logo can only convey so much empathy, compassion and reassurance. Address your audience as the CEO, the VP, the manager, the employee, the father, the mother, the human ...

top highlight 

It's a good reminder for your audience that your business consists of people who are in the same boat as they are. It might not deliver you more direct sales, but it will definitely create trust and a stronger connection.



Choice of words and visuals

Even if you're not addressing the COVID-19 situation directly in your campaigns, it's still a good idea to check them for a possible poor choice of words and/or visuals.

Messages that promote events, conferences, parties, festivals ... basically any form of social interaction, might not go down well because of the inability to experience them.

The same goes for the choice of images/footage. Visuals that depict togetherness will make you seem oblivious to the obvious.

Examples of other sensitive topics are health, school, grocery shopping, teamwork, major sports leagues ... If you do address the topic, make sure -as we talked about in previous chapters- it is relevant to your business and its services and/or products.



Think outside of your regular playbook

So what should you promote or communicate to your audience if you can't sell to them or fill in a certain need right away?

The answer: Anything that ties in your business with the current situation or is just interesting to know in general. You have a lot of content lying around, waiting to be created and you might not even be aware of it.

Take a high end clothing store for example. A store that heavily relies on people coming in, trying out outfits, getting advice and maybe some tailoring. Not the kind of business that easily translates to an online shop.



So what does this type of business do in the meantime to get in touch with your customers? Well ...

1

You can tell people about your origin story. What drove you to start this particular business?

2

You can tell customers more about your products. Why did you choose certain fabrics?

3

You can tell more about the people behind your brand. What's work like on a daily basis?

4

You can tell more about your suppliers and the people who work there. Who is putting in the hours?

5

You can talk about the stock you couldn't get rid of and how you donated it to healthcare workers. ...

It's not even necessary for people to consume every piece of content, or even read/watch it entirely. The most important thing is that you're reaching out in a creative and interesting way.



Be prepared for the post-COVID-19 stretch

Stay in touch with your audience

As we said before, during the crisis period, it's vital to reach out and fittingly connect with your audience. How long before you can slowly return to selling is anyone's guess at this point, but the time will come eventually.

As people are slowly readjusting, you want to readjust your communication accordingly.

The best way to do this is to follow-up on the situation as closely as you can. Check-in on the news regularly and talk to a lot of different people. Sooner or later, you will start to notice a change in tone, in mindset, in behaviour ... If you can relay this development in your business communication and campaigns, you will keep on talking the right language.



Prepare your (re-)activation campaigns

So, there will be a moment when daily life will slowly try to return as it was before. (or in a similar way at least) Whether or not purchasing power or overall (buying) behaviour will be the same, remains to be seen. But if you put everything on hold until you have a solid idea of what the landscape looks like, you might miss out big.

top highlight 

Not that we're predicting Gold Rush-like scenarios, but there might be some huge opportunities for being the first one back out there. So ideally, you'll want to have some (re-)activation campaigns prepared and ready to go before the time is right.

Even if your campaigns aren't 100% compatible with the "after-COVID-landscape", at least you won't have to start from scratch. A few simple adjustments might do the trick.

Adjust expectations

It goes without saying that you should re-adjust your goals and targets for 2020. Realistically, What do you think to achieve by the end of 2020? Be sure to set up a flexible plan which involves both worst and best case scenarios. What approach will you adopt? Will you be aggressive and try to sweep the market when everyone is still sleeping? Or will 2020 be purely focusing on damage control? Either way, adjust your targets, budgets and goals.



Emphasize loyalty even more

When this all blows over eventually, the decision to focus on acquisition might seem pretty straightforward in a lot of ways. But you have to watch out. First off, after a crisis, we can expect people to be less likely to take risks and will reach out to the brands they already know and trust. So it will not be easy to convert a lot of new customers. Secondly, it's an all-in approach. You will have to revamp all campaigns and budgets without knowing for sure that customer sentiment is the same as before the crisis. There is no precedent here, so it's hard to be sure however.

top highlight

But we really suggest investing equally in strategies that cater to the needs of your current and most loyal customers first. Why?

1

Loyalty campaigns are less capital intensive than acquisition campaigns. It's cheaper to convert an existing customer than to find new customers. And besides, loyal customers spend more on average than regular ones.

2

Your most loyal customers are the ones that will help you survive the next crisis. So find and create more of them.



A couple more tips to survive this period

1

Focus on how to get people in your shops

It's not because everyone is allowed to go outside, that everyone will do so immediately.

2

Easy does it. Focus on your past winners

Don't restart all campaigns immediately. Be gentle and find out if what used to work, still works.

3

Your staff will need convincing too. Think about remobilizing your staff as well. Will they be ready to get back to work?

4

Analyze other markets. Countries like China and Italy are a few weeks/months ahead of us. Policies that are introduced there (or similar) will most likely also be implemented here. Learn from them.

5

There is a new normal. Things will not go back to normal immediately. Some people will implement social distancing permanently in some shape or form, others might be more outgoing than ever now that they get the chance. Interact with people on a daily basis to see if what drives them has changed and in what way.



Now what? Explore more.



[Read all of our resources here.](#)