

How to market your business during COVID-19

The current crisis is changing how companies market themselves, which creates an opportunity for small businesses to stand out. Coming up with a strong marketing plan now can set you up for success well into the future.

This isn't marketing as usual

Before you build your marketing plan, take stock of the way businesses — large and small — changed their advertising at the start of the COVID crisis.

63%
of companies changed their messaging.¹

74%
of companies posted less social content.²

68%
of companies expect to spend less on ads.³

With businesses spending and posting less, you may have an opportunity to stand out. If your competitors are spending less on ads, great marketing could help you grab market share.

Action: Pay attention to how customers react to new advertising campaigns for ideas on what to do and what to avoid.

Revise your message

An effective message acknowledges changes in consumer behavior. Since habits keep changing as the crisis evolves, your message should, too.



+21%
more people are opening email newsletters.⁴

More people reading emails means it's more important than ever to say the right thing.

Actions to take...

- ✓ **Offer basic information** to keep customers up-to-date on how your business is changing.
- ✓ **Build goodwill** via customer-centric products and services, as well as through relevant content.
- ✓ **Acknowledge customer concerns**, especially if your customers might be facing health or financial issues.

...and to avoid

- ✗ **Don't go too far off brand**; it can come across fake. Make sure any mention of COVID-19 feels natural, and not like you're using the crisis to generate sales.

Adjust your tactics

How you distribute your message should account for the fact that people are spending more time at home checking email, social media and even postal mail.



3x
more likely to research products ahead of time during COVID-19.⁵

This creates new opportunities for people to discover your business.

Actions to take...

- ✓ **Widen your target**: With more people researching products, you don't want to miss an opportunity by casting a narrow net.
- ✓ **Play nice**: Americans want to help small businesses rebuild; that may mean supporting both you and your competitors.
- ✓ **Go to them**: Choose the placement of ads (e.g., TV, social media or print) based on your clients' changing lifestyles.

...and to avoid

- ✗ **Don't push a purchase**, which can feel aggressive — especially when people are already stressed. Instead, focus on brand awareness.

Stay invested

Think twice before you slash your marketing budget completely. Spend smarter by using metrics to track the success of your efforts.



+81%
Uptick in most online retail sales, from May 2019 to May 2020.⁶

Marketing can help you discover new customers to help carry you through recovery and beyond.

Actions to take...

- ✓ **Establish a baseline** by looking at your marketing pre-COVID. How much did you spend, and what were your results?
- ✓ **Set a marketing budget** that makes sense by looking at cash flow and current ad rates.
- ✓ **Be flexible** about what success looks like. Try to value "soft" success, too, like more people learning about your company.

...and to avoid

- ✗ **Don't ignore the future**. It can be hard to picture life after a vaccine, but eventually this crisis will end. Savvy marketing now can help you find customers and grow beyond COVID-19.

People need products and services as much as ever, but your marketing needs to feel different than it did pre-crisis. Look for opportunities by thinking about how marketing can help you find and engage customers.

¹ Coronavirus Ad Spend Impact: Buy-Side, Interactive Advertising Bureau, March 27, 2020

^{2,3} Coronavirus (COVID-19) Marketing & Ad Spend Impact: Report + Stats, Influencer Marketing Hub, June 16, 2020

⁴ Stats On Coronavirus's (COVID-19) Impact on Email Marketing: Insights From 600+ Newsletters, Paved Blog, accessed June 10, 2020

⁵ Survata Insights Report: Trusting Brand Names Over Generics in Light of COVID-19, Survata, April 30, 2020

⁶ 81 Percent Rise in May Retail eCommerce Sales, ACI Worldwide Research Reveals, ACI, June 08, 2020