

Marketing in the Moment

CRISIS MARKETING E-BOOK

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Take a Moment to Conduct a Brand Audit

How brands prepare today for a return to some form of normalcy can make all the difference in the recovery of your business.

Companies that are using this time to develop a re-entry marketing strategy will have the advantage. The months consumers have spent away from their normal purchasing patterns opens a myriad of opportunities to increase market share or inversely, to lose it.

One of the best places to start is with a brand audit.

A brand audit is simply reviewing your brand's assets and position to see where you are today and if it aligns with where you want your brand to be in the future.

Materials you'll want to review include:

- Internal positioning documents, such as your Unique Selling Proposition, brand story, values and company culture. The goal is to ensure these still hold true and are relevant to your company and your customers.
- External marketing materials including logos, ads, website, social media platforms and third-party mentions such as news and industry outlets. The questions you'll need to answer are:
 - Does this material still create a realistic and beneficial impression of your company?
 - Does it give the freedom to evolve the brand for tomorrow's market realities?
- Industry and consumer market research should be utilized to ensure your positioning aligns with demand.
- Once the brand audit is complete, you'll have a better understanding of where your brand has been and what needs to be revised, replaced or re-energized to ensure your marketing will resonate with your target market.

Start or Re-Energize a Blog

How do you stay top-of-mind with your customers if they can't visit you? That's one of the major challenges COVID-19 has presented to businesses everywhere.

Relationships between consumers and businesses are one of the cornerstones in creating brand loyalty. People like to feel there is a personal connection with companies they do business with. But just like person-to-person relationships, once you stop communicating the relationship fades away and is eventually forgotten.

So how do you keep in touch without appearing to be bombarding your audience with sales pitches? A blog.

A blog gives you a valid reason to reach out to your customers. A blog also provides you the opportunity to create a deeper and more meaningful relationship — as long as your blog provides value to the reader.

To be successful, blogs shouldn't be just another sales pitch. They should share insights, helpful information and be engaging or entertaining. For example, if you own a restaurant that is closed, weekly recipes from your chef that people can make at home would be seen as fun and beneficial to your readers and would also keep your business top-of-mind.

Additionally, you can invite people to sign up to receive the blog in their email. This ensures your readers stay engaged and also provides you with new email addresses for your database.

When starting a blog, you need to commit to a schedule so people get in the habit of visiting your site on specific days or weeks. Blogs that are posted erratically are often forgotten because people don't want to waste time seeing if a new blog has been posted.

If your company is already blogging, now is a good time to review your strategy to ensure your content provides value and is adhering to a regular schedule to maximize the return on your investment.

Whether you're starting a new blog or re-energizing an existing one, remember to keep your readers' interests in mind because no one wants to listen to the person who only talks about themselves.

Plan for This and That

One day it seems like the world is opening up again. The next day the door slams shut. Obviously, everyone is still trying to feel their way through the right way to move beyond the COVID-19 crisis and that will inevitably lead to a lot of missteps.

With this in mind, even though the doors that seem to be opening with states relaxing their guidelines, it's smart to not count on a quick and complete return to normal. This means keeping your marketing plans flexible to adapt to the one step forward, two steps back reality we'll all be dealing with for a while.

Preparing marketing strategies for a variety of scenarios – return to normal, return to some degree of normal or back to lockdown will put you ahead of the game, regardless of what the rest of this crazy year gives us.

The one advantage we all now have is that we've seen what a pandemic can do to our economy and, by necessity, learned what steps can work to minimize the damage to our company's brand and bottom line.

The old saying seems most appropriate for today's chaotic markets: **“Plan for the best and prepare for the worst.”**

Keep Smart Solutions Close at Hand

The one thing you can be sure of during a pandemic or any major market upset, is that you can never be sure what will happen next. These times of dramatic changes in consumer habits require marketers to be nimble and capable of pivoting at the drop of a hat.

This uncertainty makes it worthwhile to develop a variety of digital communication outreach tools for potential market shifts.

To begin, consider scenarios that would alter how you normally do business. What if you had to close your store or business location? What if there was a supply shortage for products you need to operate. What if most of your staff couldn't report to work? As you probably noticed, all of these events have happened to a lot of businesses during the pandemic.

Next, prepare some digital communication messages that can be used to inform customers, and potential customers, about your business's status. A few pre-prepared social media posts, emails and website notices can keep your customers informed and also provide you the time needed to develop a new marketing strategy if the unseen events appear to be long term.

Keeping this type of digital communication preplanning close at hand can help prevent mistakes and also prevent you or your staff from feeling completely out of control.

Of course, you can't plan for every imaginable market scenario (like Murder Hornets) but having a file of prepared messages can help keep you clear-headed during stressful times.

Revisit Missed Opportunities

Nearly every company has had to adjust how they do business to cope with the financial upheaval of the pandemic. Chances are your business has probably made a few changes to better weather the altered marketplace, too.

These shifts in a company's standard operating procedures may also have changed what they're looking for from vendors. That makes this a good time to review past efforts that didn't result in gaining the business.

The reasons you didn't secure the business the first time around may have changed. Maybe the company you talked to before the pandemic now needs a supplier or service provider that is more nimble, or is nearer to their operation, or provides other services, or a host of other reasons. It may even be that the company that originally won the business has changed because of the pandemic and can no longer offer the same capabilities or level of service.

After you've reviewed which businesses may be worth reaching out to again, you should also review and potentially update the marketing material you'll utilize to ensure it is communicating a message that is appropriate for today's market conditions.

Moving forward, you may find that old opportunities may become a valuable source of new opportunities.

Provide Some Emotional Relief

It's difficult to read or view news without hearing terms like pandemic burnout, COVID fatigue or quarantine depression. The truth is no one really expected this disease and its accompanying work and social upheaval to last for months and months and months and months...

The related stress, feelings of helplessness and depression have become a new emotional normal for millions of Americans. People are desperate for something upbeat to help alleviate this dark cloud that seems as if it will never end.

This makes it a good time for marketers to review the tone of their social media interactions and to be open to some good old-fashioned fun for fun's sake. Social media sites that provide some emotional relief, whether through appropriate jokes, feel-good stories or uplifting sentiments, will likely be more attractive to consumers and thus encourage more repeat visits.

Making light of the pandemic is not a good direction, but shedding light on other positive aspects of life can grow brand loyalty and encourage deeper consumer engagement with your business.

In the spirit of levity we'll leave you with this –

*What's a personality trait of a bad marketer?
They're anti-social!*

Show Appreciation

Even as we muddle through this seemingly never-ending pandemic, it's good to remember that in today's global marketplace consumers have more choices than ever. This means it is more important than ever to create connections with your customers that go beyond just providing a product or service.

A business can show customer appreciation in a variety of ways to create a sense of loyalty to your business. One of the easiest ways to do this is to send a thank you email, a handwritten note or even a phone call after a purchase has been made. While it may not seem like a big deal, feeling appreciated can go a long way to make people feel good about choosing your business.

A few other methods to consider are sending your customers non-sale oriented holiday cards or emails that can keep you top-of-mind during key sales periods. Setting up a loyalty program is another way to encourage return visits. Loyalty programs can be anything from discounts or free gifts based on previous purchases to advanced notice of new products, services or upcoming sales.

Social media platforms also provide a cost-effective way to show appreciation to customers. These posts may also encourage non-customers to consider your business the next time they need a product or service you offer.

For a year like 2020, anything that makes people feel good will be remembered. And for everyone reading this – Insight Marketing Design says - Thank you!

Every Word has Power

With the promise of COVID-19 vaccines arriving shortly, our government is faced with the task of convincing Americans to roll up their sleeves and actually get a shot or, in many cases, two shots. To do this effectively they need to take the politics out of the message as much as possible.

To this end, research has been undertaken to better understand what words will work better to encourage vaccination participation. The findings are something any business or organization may want to consider when referencing the pandemic in marketing materials, public relations outreach and even when talking with their own employees.

A few examples of words that work better during the pandemic include:

Pandemic versus coronavirus – The research found that the word pandemic humanizes and personalizes the event. Coronavirus was found to be taken less seriously and made the disease seem less significant.

Protocols versus mandates – The study found that words like “mandate” caused people to react defensively and feel controlled. “Protocol” was seen as practical advice.

Fact-based versus science – All the derisive talk about what science is and is not has made the word “science” suspect to many. The research participants felt that “fact-based” was more effective at portraying something true.

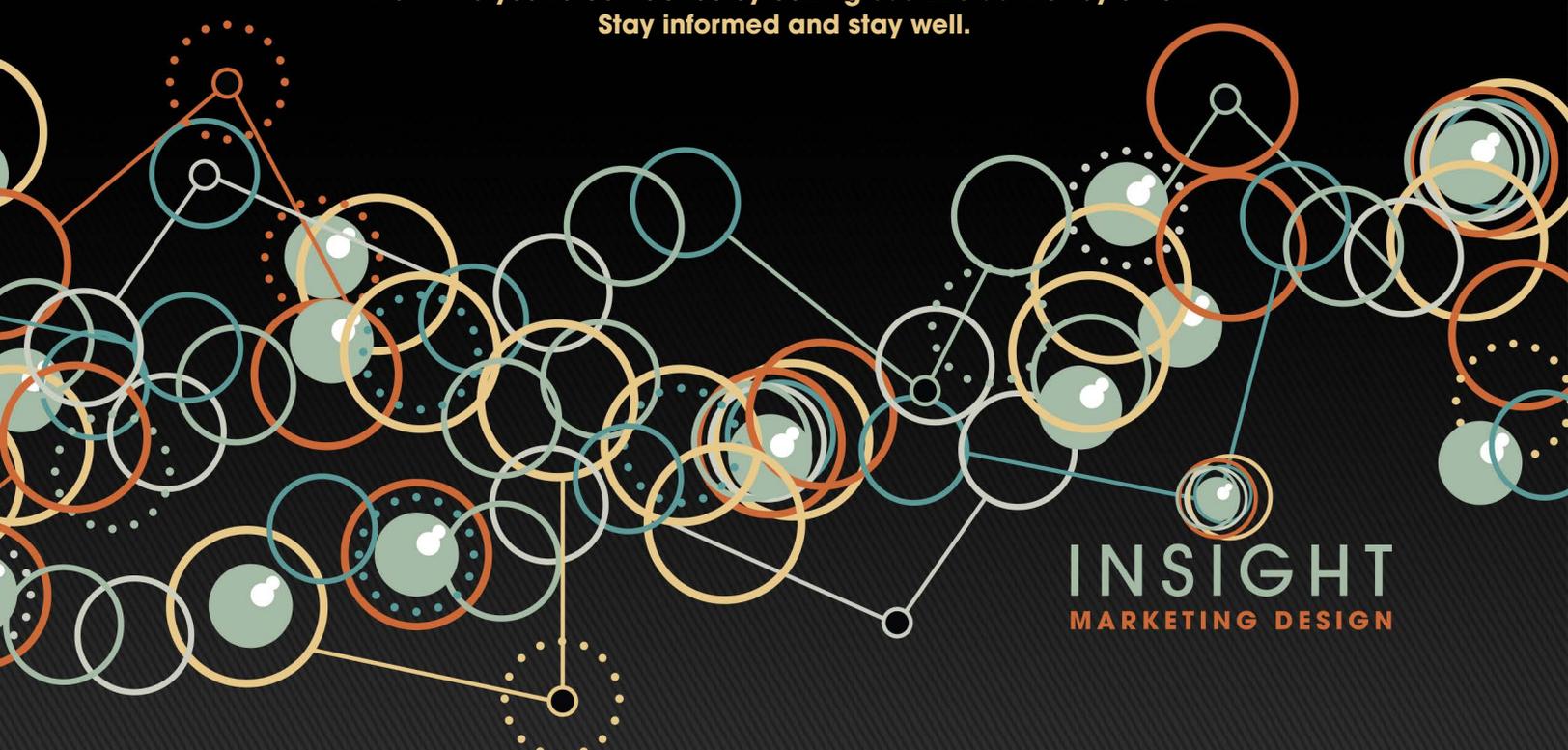
While it may seem that worrying about which individual words are used during a crisis is inconsequential, the reality is that the right words may be what helps us put this tragic event behind us.

Thank You!

**Now you can go back to
binge watching Tiger King.**

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**If you'd like more information on any of these topics
we invite you to contact us by calling 605-275-0011 or by email.
Stay informed and stay well.**



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