AFTER THE LOCKDOWN:

PANDEMIC MARKETING 2.0

Lockdown marketing advice emphasized the need for a strong online presence that included digital communications and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) development. And, most companies that survived, or even thrived during the lockdown, were successful as a result of their digital connections. Successful companies communicated digitally with current customers, expanded their reach to new clients, created partnerships, accepted and fulfilled orders, and monitored their strategies to maximize successful activities and minimize wasted effort.

But digital marketing is here to stay.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we interact with our family, friends, neighbors, and customers. During this time, many relied on the internet for everything from groceries to Zoom gatherings. There is no evidence that we will fully go back to old ways of doing business.

Now is the time to leverage the account and prospect base you have maintained and developed while you worked off site:

- Develop your post-pandemic marketing message and distribute it to your customer base via your blog, e-newsletters, social media, and website. Provide an update on the status of your business (open, closed, or partially opened), how to order, delivery options, and dates you expect to welcome customers face-to-face.

- Let them know what you have been doing. Do you have new products? How about new services (like curbside pick-up, free delivery, or streamlined web or phone ordering)? Be sure they know all the great things that have happened during remote work.

- Let them know you take the virus and their concerns seriously. Provide guidance on cleaning protocol and whether masks or social distancing will be required once you are face-to-face again. Be sure to thank them for their support and offer a “back to work” special or offer if you can.

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MARKETING MESSAGES

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Make sure your digital experience is working seamlessly. (We assume you have been fine tuning this throughout the shutdown!) While you may be adding alternatives, such as face-to-face meetings and open store or in-restaurant dining, your digital connection is now a fixture. Ensure that ordering, tracking, and messaging is error-free, reliable, and provides human contact when needed.

If you aren’t sure how well your digital experience is perceived, take a survey, ask your customers, or hire someone to conduct a review. (The SBTDC can help you with these projects with no and low-cost services.)

SEO

Take the time to review the SEO analysis you initiated at the start of the shutdown. (What? You didn’t take the time to set this up eight weeks ago? This information is critical and it isn’t too late!)

Setting up SEO is often free. This tool helps you analyze and manage the success of your website. It helps you ensure a high ranking when clients use keyword searches within Google or other sites.

Once a customer lands at your site, SEO can help you answer:

- Where did the visitor originate from? (A partner site, like an association, a Facebook page, a browser search, etc.)
- What time of day or night did they visit?
- Did they land and leave? Or, if they clicked through, what pages did they visit?
- Did they leave items in their shopping basket, never to return? Or, did they order, pay, and accept delivery?

And, while you’re at it, make sure your Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages all have live links to your website. Add them to EVERY newsletter, blog, or partner website where you are located.

BUSINESS PLANNING

Review your business and marketing plans and revise for 2.0. Now is the time to re-evaluate and define your new objectives, strategies, and tactics. Put them in writing. Budget and get buy-in from your team.

MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Create a new marketing campaign that supports your new business plan, including ROI goals, and execute!

Do you need more information or assistance with developing a post-pandemic marketing plan for your business?

The North Carolina Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC) has counselors, market researchers, and specialists that are available to help you implement your digital communications and marketing strategies. Visit [www.sbtdc.org](http://www.sbtdc.org) to connect with us today!