

# MARKETING TIP

Extra Mile Marketing | Best Practice

May 2020



## Marketing in a COVID-19 World: 5 Ways to Build Your Business in Today's Environment.

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Well, things have sure been flipped upside-down. We were on a roll – everyone bullish about 2020. Our first few months of the year were big, particularly in the tech sector but also in healthcare, non-profit and professional services. Our clients were ready to tackle a new decade.

And then it hit.

Our agency is located in Bellevue, Washington—not far from the nursing home where COVID-19 first touched down in America. As the virus spread, we knew early on...this was not a one-time thing. This was going to be a crisis.

So, here we are, just a few months later, wearing masks and hoarding toilet paper. All gatherings are cancelled – that includes dinners, weddings, and yes, trade shows and other industry events. So now what?

Drawing on our own experience working on projects during this unique moment, and with the added knowledge gained from virtual lectures I've been attending, here is some advice on how to market—and even grow—your business under the shadow of the coronavirus:

1. **This is not a time for hard sales.** Now is a time for empathy and patience. This moment requires that you get to know your customers and prospects a little better, so you can help them accomplish their goals instead of selling them the products or services you want to sell. Of course, in my book, this is the way sales should always be conducted.
2. **Kids, dogs, doorbells, and delivery interruptions are fun!** We are getting the rare opportunity to peek inside our clients' lives. We are sharing experiences and building bonds. I have a client at Microsoft who is disappointed if Jessica (in our office) does not bring Zoe (her daughter) to meetings. He looks forward to saying hi to Zoe at every meeting. In

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**51% of buyers seek additional content before buying**, and 30% of those who download content share with others.



another world, he wouldn't even know Jessica had a child. In marketing, we talk about building relationships as a key to creating customers for life and this is a perfect opportunity.

3. **Thought leadership is in high demand.** Thought leadership is the best way to market right now. Your prospects have more time than ever to read your blog articles and eBooks. They are ready to watch your videos and experience your demos. They may not be ready to buy just yet, but they will be. This is a great time to build some strategic, educational content that sows the seeds for later in the year. Educational content is a way for prospects to get to know you, and for you to build credibility before they are ready to commit. In fact, 51% of buyers seek additional content before buying, and 30% of those who download content share with others. One of the best ways to know what thought leadership content you should produce is to listen to the online chatter. For example, if you are trying to market into the financial services space, check out some of the FinServ groups on LinkedIn, and watch what questions are being asked, or what articles are being liked or shared. This will give you great insight into what you should write about.
4. **Social media is big. Real big.** Right now, virtual communities are booming. Online networking is exploding. Even if you haven't been keen on social marketing in the past, now is the time to embrace it. Virtually all our clients are currently active on social media. They are seeing increased traffic to their websites and higher viewership of their blogs, infographics, eBooks, videos, press releases (as long as they are Coronavirus-related), case studies and other content. Social media, along with Search Engine Marketing (SEM), requires careful thought and a strategy that will attract the right participants. Don't be afraid to try a wide variety of messaging, formats, and keywords. We are finding that short social videos are getting the best uptake, followed by invitations to online events, and links to thought leadership content.
5. **Invest in current clients.** While this seems self-evident, remember to concentrate on keeping your current clients happy so when they are ready to re-open their shop, you are on their mind. This includes offering online training and how to guides. Teaching customers and partners how to use what they already have is a great way to build loyalty. And, the more a customer uses your products or services, the stickier the relationship and the more likely they will be to grow with you.

Overall, the best strategy in today's environment is to concentrate on building relationships. It's about growing and giving loyalty to your best customers. It's about showing concern for their well-being and sharing insights. Our team has been meeting every day at noon for ½ hour just to check in with each other. We talk about any struggles we are having and usually we have time to play a game – either trivia, or name that tune, or “all about Meryl Streep”. We have a new employee, Matt, who has never worked a day in our office, because we were all sheltering in place by the time he came on board, yet he feels very much a part of the team, and I can't imagine what it was like before he joined. We have a client whose 6 year old son likes to visit his mom frequently during our weekly review meetings, who showed up naked yesterday (he was playing on his slip and slide) and made us all laugh. Yes, this is a hard time, but it is also a time that offers opportunities if we embrace them.

Stay well. Stay safe.