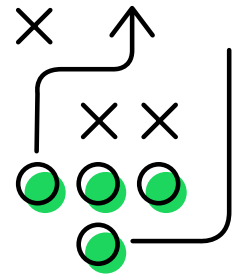


The pandemic continues: 5 marketing essentials you can't overlook



The coronavirus pandemic started making its way through the nation in the early months of this year. As COVID-19 cases have steadily increased in recent weeks—with several new hot spots emerging, we as marketers continue to grapple with the widespread, evolving impacts. We all find ourselves identifying the careful balance between navigating today's landscape and keeping an eye towards the near and distant future. MERGE asked its marketing and technology experts about one thing that all organizations cannot overlook during this uniquely uncertain time. Here's what they had to say:



Crisis Communications. As organizations are preparing to address the latest COVID-19 surge, the proverb “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.” is as relevant as ever. Due to the fast pace of the initial outbreak, organizations were challenged to adequately communicate operational changes and new policies and procedures to key stakeholders. Now, a new dynamic is in place. Customers, consumers, employees and other key stakeholders will be holding organizations to a higher standard. All actions and decisions will be scrutinized. Marketers and communicators should proactively prepare communications responses now to the myriad of scenarios most likely to impact their organizations. It will be key to staying one step ahead and communicating how all decisions and actions tie back to their organization's values.

- Jack Yeo, SVP, Corporate Communications



Internal Comms. In times of uncertainty it is best to over-communicate and do so with empathy. Offering transparency into decisions – how they were made and why, along with clear updates about the status creates trust, credibility and camaraderie. The more casual and human the message, the better. Look beyond the obvious for new channels to reach your internal stakeholders, think about how your audience likes to receive information and determine what is convenient for them. While there is no universal answer, social channels, intranets and other messaging apps that enable quick reach should be considered. In times like these, it's important to think about information sharing as a means of bonding and unification for internal teams.

- Joanna Horn, SVP, Public Relations



Content. With a focus on industry leadership and proactive digital communications, provide factual and relevant information to guide your internal and external audiences toward continued health and well-being with innovative solutions to meet their needs. This should be delivered in “snackable” sized content that can be easily and quickly digested by audiences.

- Meredith Rose, VP, Content Services



Web. One of the biggest trends we've seen as uncertainty rises is the need to provide accurate and timely updates to clients and prospects. Whether this means updated business hours, new guidelines for in-person interactions or simply reassurance that routine business is occurring, users start with your website and Google first. Take time to review the strategies that have worked in the current climate, revise those that haven't and plan for the next unexpected event as the new normal.

- Michael Wood, Vice President, Digital Solutions



Digital. Now is the time to review and update your current buyer personas and discover any new ones you may not have considered before. Online behaviors have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, thus creating the need to evaluate and redefine buyer personas for your business. Sales and Customer Service Teams can provide valuable insights based on real-time conversations occurring with these audiences to help guide this process.

- Amanda Shelley, Director, Digital Marketing

Need help with your marketing plans?

At MERGE, we understand these evolving challenges, and are here to help guide other marketers into navigating this new landscape with confidence. Learn more at <https://mergeworld.com/marketing-advertising-services/creative-and-communications>.