

MARKETING THROUGH UNCERTAIN TIMES

Insights From 15 Experts

Introduction

MARKETING IS NO STRANGER TO TRANSFORMATION. THE RISE OF AUTOMATION, AI, DIGITAL, VIDEO, MOBILE AND OTHER INNOVATIONS HAVE BEEN CHANGING THE MARKETING LANDSCAPE RAPIDLY OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS.

But few will have predicted the transformation that ensues as a result of this unexpected global pandemic. Confidence and certainty have been replaced overnight by fear and uncertainty. At least initially until we pick ourselves up off the ground and dust ourselves off.

As marketers, we can waste no time in doing this. And fortunately, our peer group have been characteristically generous in offering their advice and insights – helping each other to survive and hopefully thrive in the ‘new normal’ that awaits us.

We’ve put together a collection of these insights from marketing folk who’ve been in the trenches and have got something useful to say.

For us marketers, this steep learning curve will serve us well for the future – we’ll be better equipped to navigate through uncertain times. And be stronger for it.

We hope you enjoy reading these insights and would like to thank all of the contributors for their wise words.

Thanks for reading.

The InsightBrief Team



UNCERTAINTY IS NOT THE SAME THING AS RISK. OFTEN, THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK WE DO DOESN'T BRING A GUARANTEED, SPECIFIC RESULT.

USUALLY, THE RESULT OF ANY GIVEN ACTION ON OUR PART IS UNKNOWN. UNCERTAINTY IMPLIES A RANGE OF POSSIBLE OUTCOMES.

BUT A RANGE OF RESULTS, ALL UNCERTAIN, DOES NOT MEAN YOU ARE EXPOSING YOURSELF TO RISK. IT MERELY MEANS YOU'RE EXPOSING YOURSELF TO AN OUTCOME YOU DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO FALL IN LOVE WITH IN ADVANCE.

– **Seth Godin**

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□ TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PAUSE, EVALUATE AND RESET

Seize the opportunity to get ahead of the chaos that today defines many marketing roles. How can you tee yourself and your department up right now, so that when things calm down you're more on top of your game than ever before?

Ann Handley

Chief Content Officer, MarketingProfs

SOURCE: marketingprofs.com/articles/2020/42586/what-marketers-can-do-right-now-in-the-age-of-coronavirus-a-letter-from-ann-handley



□ INVEST IN CONTENT MARKETING TO GAIN LOYALTY OF AUDIENCE

During difficult times, all businesses should make time and space in their budget and schedule for content marketing.

Investing in content marketing now can win the loyalty of an audience who will become customers later.

This is not the time for self-serving content: Always aim to provide as much value as possible.

Michael Brenner

CEO, Marketing Insider Group

SOURCE: marketinginsidergroup.com/content-marketing/marketing-in-difficult-times-content-marketing



□ SHARE HELPFUL TIPS AND IDEAS IN YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE

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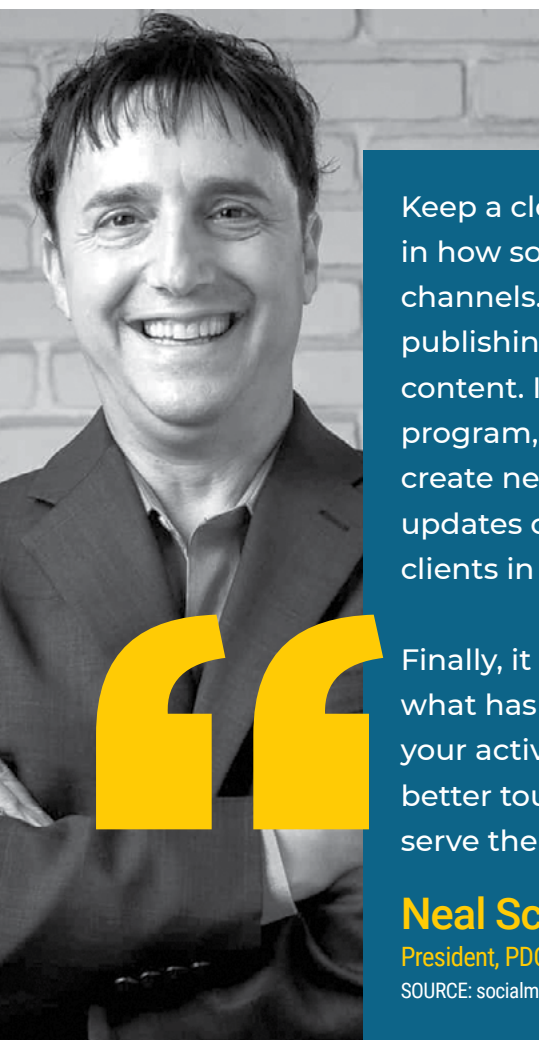
A tip for making your helping feel less like selling: If your products really are relevant right now, but you don't want to sell-sell-sell, here are two things you might try:

Share ideas that don't relate to your products. You probably know many things that will help right now. This is your area of expertise. So share all the helpful tips you can, not just the ones you provide.

Doug Kessler

Creative Director, Velocity Partners

SOURCE: velocitypartners.com/blog/wfh4-covid-marketing-three-principles/



□ BE PREPARED TO PIVOT YOUR BUSINESS FOR LONG TERM SUCCESS

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Keep a close eye on your social media analytics and look for changes in how social media users are engaging with your content and your channels. It might be a good idea to decrease the frequency of publishing if you see that people are simply not engaging with your content. If you still want to try to hit KPIs that are essential to your program, this is where you might need to get a little bit creative; and create new content complementing that with paid social to provide updates on how you can help and serve your customers and potential clients in these troubled times.

Finally, it might be time to revisit your goals for this year in light of what has happened and perhaps scale down your expectations and your activity. You may want to shift time and resources to keep in better touch with your current customers and understand how to serve them better.

Neal Schaffer

President, PDCA Social

SOURCE: socialmediaexaminer.com/marketing-in-times-of-uncertainty-tips-from-top-marketing-pros/



□ RETHINK BUSINESS STRATEGY TO FOCUS ON THE PERSON, NOT THE BUSINESS

We need to rethink our “Business to Business” strategy more as a “Business to Business People” strategy to remind ourselves that the person, not the business, is ultimately behind the driver’s seat.

Matthew Sutton

Global Brand Marketing Lead, Facebook

SOURCE: toprankblog.com/2019/10/b2b-marketing-fitness/



□ YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IS NEEDED MORE NOW THAN EVER

Put yourself in the shoes of your team, customers or family. No doubt, like you, they’ll be experiencing emotions that are outside normal comfort zones. Uncertainty creates fear and anxiety. As a leader, be aware that your emotional intelligence is needed more now than ever – potentially saving you serious pain and regret.

Paul Denham

CMO, InsightBrief

SOURCE: linkedin.com/pulse/your-emotional-intelligence-helping-hindering-paul-denham/



❑ UPDATE AND REFRESH YOUR DIGITAL CHANNELS

- Stay in close contact with your customers. Learn what you can do to better support them, anticipate changes and offer resources.
- Make sure your brand digital channels are up to date including website, blog, social network profiles, and Google My Business listings.
- Commit to video – convert marketing message activities to video and if you have live video access on LinkedIn for execs or your brand – start using it now.
- Optimize your digital channels: Refresh SEO, social, online advertising and influencer efforts. Identify what is working and reallocate resources and budget as appropriate.

Lee Odden

CEO, TopRank Marketing

SOURCE: toprankblog.com/2020/03/covid19-stop-b2b-marketing/



❑ CONTINUE TO PROVIDE VALUE - BE MINDFUL AND EMPATHETIC OF YOUR AUDIENCE

Continue to provide value, no matter what. But, depending on the type of product or service and your industry, if you're still in a position to promote online, first keep in mind the likely current emotional and mental state of most of your audience. Many small business owners are feeling immense fear around their livelihood.

Mari Smith

Facebook Marketing Expert

SOURCE: socialmediaexaminer.com/marketing-in-times-of-uncertainty-tips-from-top-marketing-pros/

❑ FOCUS ON CONTENT MARKETING THAT IS USEFUL/INFORMATIVE/EDUCATIONAL



Use this time to shift from direct selling to content marketing that is useful to your prospects. Why? Right now, people are watching videos more, reading more, and listening more. How can you use video, blog posts, and podcasts to show up and help your customers solve the problems they're facing right now?

When you do move back into a regular marketing cadence, remember that the world is in shock and your messaging will need to be crafted with empathy and wisdom.

Michael Stelzner

CEO, Social Media Examiner

SOURCE: socialmediaexaminer.com/marketing-in-times-of-uncertainty-tips-from-top-marketing-pros/

❑ ESTABLISH BEST PRACTICES TO KEEP YOUR TEAM FOCUSED FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS



That's why it's key to establish best practices that keep your team focused on the right methods for achieving success. Best practices should hit all the major muscle groups of your marketing org:

- Market intelligence collection and application
- Content planning
- Content creation workflows
- Publishing cadence and amplification
- Conversion measurement and attribution

Allen Gannett

Chief Strategy Officer & EVP, Skyword

SOURCE: view.ceros.com/toprank-marketing/marketingpros/p/3



❑ CONTENT MUST SERVE A PURPOSE – EDUCATIONAL RATHER THAN SALESY

While marketers work tirelessly to guide prospects through the buyer's journey, creating and curating content mindfully will be essential to a successful content marketing program. During this time of uncertainty, content must serve a purpose that adds value to the problems and aims to educate — instead of sell.

Randy Frisch

CMO, Uberflip

SOURCE: cmswire.com/digital-marketing/why-marketing-in-the-current-climate-requires-empathy-and-deep-content-analysis/



❑ RETHINK YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS & BIOS TO REFLECT THE TIMES

This is not the time for frivolous posts that are sent because they are “due” per the social media editorial calendar. That doesn't mean you can't be lighthearted, or even funny. It does mean, however, that you must carefully consider WHY you are posting in social media.

- For whom is this post intended?
- How does it entertain, inform, educate, or benefit that audience?
- What specific behavior change or thinking change are we trying to effectuate with this post?

Jay Baer

Founder, Convince & Convert

SOURCE: convinceandconvert.com/social-media-marketing/social-media-coronavirus/



❑ INVEST IN YOUR MARKETING INVENTORY - IT WILL HELP YOU OUTPERFORM AS MARKETS RESUME

I would invest now for the second and third waves. I think that's a really smart way to go. You can look at Harvard Business Review and Bloomberg and a bunch of folks have written about investing during times of recession, times of fear, and seeing how.

When those things start to come, we will want to have now messaging and content and keyword demands serving. Right. And ads and webinars. Anything that is in our marketing inventory that can be helpful to people, not just during this time, but over the course of these, because if we make these investments now, we will be better set up than our competitors who are pulling back to execute on this. And that is what that research shows, right, that essentially folks who invest in marketing, in sales during a recession tend to outperform and more quickly outperform their competition as markets resume. You don't even have to wait for them to get good — just as they start to pick up.

Rand Fishkin

CEO, SparkToro

SOURCE: growtraffic.co.uk/covid-19-marketing-advice-from-the-digital-marketing-gurus/



**□ FOCUS ON BUILDING
EMOTIONAL SAFETY FROM
WITHIN YOUR TEAM**

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I recently worked with a large, global brand that was going through a reputation crisis. The leaders decided to form a new team to create original content and storytelling to help employees trust the brand again.

One of the keys to their success was focusing on and building emotional safety from within. They first created a team environment that allowed them to engage courageously, face tough facts, manage the crises, and see themselves as they were, rather than simply spinning the lens of the corporate brand.

Both the content they developed, and the culture they sparked, created an environment that improved trust among those within the company. It also stands as a model for other teams. They've become a safe place.

Robert Rose

Chief Strategy Advisor, Content Marketing Institute

SOURCE: contentadvisory.net/the-critical-role-of-content-in-a-crisis/



DEMONSTRATE RESILIENCE – IT'S A PRE-REQUISITE TO GOOD LEADERSHIP

To lead through uncertain times, marketing leaders must demonstrate their resilience. Resilience has long been heralded as the key leadership trait when faced with adversity. For many they have learned to become resilient through their own experiences. We learn as a result of past failure, from overcoming challenges and from seizing opportunities.

A friend of mine, who is now in semi-retirement, has found himself in many conversations as he helps his business through these difficult times. Why now? Because he has been through several recessions, navigated messy mergers, launched some incredible products, and learned from his mistakes and led huge corporate transformations along the way. I don't think he realizes it – but resilience is the very reason everyone is turning to him.

Peter Stubbs

Partner, Prophet

SOURCE: prophet.com/2020/04/leading-your-marketing-team-through-uncertain-times/



About InsightBrief

InsightBrief is a research-led media company. Our bite-sized, insight-rich authority content is the fuel that we use to distribute and manage highly targeted campaigns to gain the attention, engage and influence our clients' ideal audiences.

InsightBrief helps high growth technology businesses expand globally with a predictable, scalable stream of marketing qualified leads (MQLs).

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