

Keeping clients informed in a socially distanced world

Whilst we all did plenty of planning for the challenges that 2020 would throw at us, nobody could have foreseen something as unique and horrifying as a global pandemic.

Suddenly we are all thrust into a new way of working – remotely and digitally. However forced it may feel, digital transformation isn't a bad thing: in fact setting up ways to effectively communicate with your clients, prospects and colleagues in a socially distanced world is something that will set you up well for the future. But what should you be communicating at this time and what are the best ways to get your message out?



You should be saying how...

- 1 You can help** – Think about what you can do to help your clients, prospects and audience during this time. What are their worries, concerns, questions? Tell them how you can help them to solve a problem, reassure them about their concerns, answer their questions, but do this in an ethical way and with the ethos of genuinely wanting to help.
- 2 To get in touch with you** – Clients who are used to seeing you face-to-face will also need to get used to the switch to digital channels. Make this as easy as possible by telling them about all the ways they can now get in touch with you; email, phone, video call, social media, post etc.
- 3 Your business has been affected** – It's unlikely that it'll be business as usual, but it's also good to let your clients know things haven't ground to a halt. So let your clients know how your service and/ or processes have changed and what they can now expect from you. Show them what you have been doing and how your business has adapted.
- 4 You can add value** – You're an expert in your field, but what are you offering that adds value to your audience? It could be a virtual event, one-to-one video message, webinar or guide.
- 5 You appreciate them** – Let your clients know you remember them and appreciate them. Talk to them directly and engage with them.



You shouldn't be...

- 1 Pushing for sales** – Trying to maximise on the situation will create negative brand association, which may never leave. So whatever you do don't try and push for sales – create awareness and generate top and middle of the funnel leads for the future.
- 2 Contacting people for the sake of it** – Yes you want to stay front of mind to your clients, but there's so much noise out there at the moment that unless you have a clear reason for contacting them and your message adds value, then don't send it!

Ways to get your message out

Keeping your customers well informed is something you can still do easily, via:

- **One-to-one email** – Email is one of the most ubiquitous communication tools, with the vast majority of adults having an email address. Whilst it's great to reach out via email, remember that people get a lot of emails, so it's important to cut through that noise: tell them why you are contacting them, what you want them to do and why they want to do it. Make it personal and remember that it's difficult to determine tone via an email, so it's usually necessary to be overly positive to avoid coming across as blunt. This can be done with the use of exclamation points or emojis, although overdoing it can seem unprofessional.
- **Bulk emails** – If you have a database then you should be using email to get your message out to them. Mailchimp is a popular (and free) email sending tool that enables you to upload your data, then send branded emails quickly and easily. It's very unlikely that one message is right for your whole database, so think of the different audience pots within your database and how you want to segment them e.g. by gender, activity, product interested in etc., then tailor their message to what you can offer them specifically. Don't forget to personalise it using the data you know about a person, including their name as a minimum.
- **Social media** – Most people have a social media presence of some kind now, and this is a great way to interact with your existing and potential clients, as well as peers and, in some cases, the media.
- **Phone** – A phone call can go a long way in building rapport and trust. Similar to an email, without a face to read it's important to be overly enthusiastic. You want to come across as compassionate, helpful and efficient, so ensure you have some clear reasons for making the call and get those points across. Not everyone will want to receive a call though, so be understanding and leave a great first and last impression.
- **Video call** – There's many tools now to video call people - Facetime, Zoom and Skype to name a few. Depending on your technology and the capabilities of the person on the receiving end will determine which ones are right for you. On a video call it's important to look the part, smile and listen!
- **Website/blog** – An effective (and non- intrusive way) to update your audience is via your website and/or blog. You can use these to house longer communications, videos, articles, FAQs etc. and then use other channels such as email and social media to direct people there.
- **Webinars** – Webinars are inherently interactive, making them ideal for you to run an educational how-to webinar, a panellist-style webinar, workshop or anything where the audience is asked to participate in some way, shape or form.

- **Podcasts** – Podcasts are becoming a part of many people's daily routine, since you don't have to be in front of a screen to enjoy them. A podcast can reach an audience in their car, while they're cooking dinner or even when they're getting ready in the morning. They are great for one-on-one interviews, panel discussions, solo commentary, co-hosted discussions and storytelling. So think of what your audience wants to know and deliver that.
- **Mail** – Direct mail is certainly still alive and well, albeit with much improved ways of producing and sending high quality communications through the post. If you can print at home and get to the post-box then a personal letter is a quick and simple way to reach your database. But there's plenty of other options to explore too; there are apps and websites where you can send postcards and other literature directly to your clients. Or maybe you want to send them some branded goodies to cheer them up?

However you decide to communicate with your clients and prospects it's important to remember to be honest, transparent, helpful and most importantly, human. So make it personal, let them know how you can help and stay front of mind for the right reasons.

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