

Coronavirus

Customer communications in a crisis



COVID-19

#keepbusinessworking

By now, most businesses will have sent their initial communications, advising their clients and suppliers of their business continuity processes.

In the same way that it's important to communicate with your clients on a regular basis during the good times, this applies more than ever during a crisis.

Your communications during a crisis must be more than a reminder of your business continuity measures. They must also provide reassurance that your business will remain open now or re-open in the future. They must also remind customers of the value of what you provide.

If you continue to engage your customers in the right way, they will remain your customers.

Five things to consider:

1 Frequency

People have already started to disengage with brands due to the volume of emails they are receiving related to their contingency operating procedures or business closure. Don't bombard your customers with how challenging the environment is or with the same message. They will switch off if you do.

2 Tone

Whilst these are unprecedented circumstances, customers will keep engaging with the brands and businesses they love. Consistency is key. Becoming more aggressive with your sales tactics might seem commercial, but if it's a change in approach, it may be unwelcome and could confuse your audience. During a crisis people embrace familiarity. Above all be human and remain true to your brand.

3 Messaging

If you have a new product or service to offer during this crisis or are able to continue selling your product or service through an alternative distribution channel, the communications principles remain the same. You need to provide very clear information about your product and pricing and then make it really easy for people to buy this from you. Whether your customers are existing or new, you need to tell them what they need to know, feel and do. Structure your communications in that order. A note of caution: audiences are naturally more sensitive during times of crisis. Be careful about launching new products or communicating messages that might seem insensitive or too much for now.

Listen to and record questions that your customers ask you. Use these questions to form part of your messaging strategy. If one person does not understand something you can be certain others will be confused. Include the answers to these questions in your messaging.

4 Channels

Give customers as many opportunities to transact with you as you can.

Use your existing communication channels to communicate with your audiences but don't be afraid to try new ones, especially if you are trying to attract new customers.

Be consistent with your frequency, tone and messaging across all of your channels. Continue to recognise the nuances of each communication channel and adjust your message accordingly.

5 Loyal Customers

Appeal to your loyal customers to support your business during these challenging times. Help them understand ways in which they can do this. If you are closed and need to inject cash flow - could they buy vouchers to spend at a later date? If you have had to diversify your offering; let them know what new products or services they can purchase.

If they are existing and loyal customers, they will be willing to advocate on your behalf and recommend you to their family, friends and networks. If they are already your customers it is perfectly acceptable to appeal to their loyalty. They will want to help you. Just remember this and think of ways to reward them when we get back to "normal".

Together we'll keep business working.

Information kindly provided by Lynne Capie, Global Head of Business Development and Communications, Appleby

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Please contact us at
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for help and support.

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