

MARKETING

With no trade shows, ramp up PR, content marketing and digital outreach

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For many companies, trade shows are the top strategy in their marketing plan. They are a great way to meet customers and partners face to face, tell your story, and close a deal with a client. They are also a place to learn and grow your industry knowledge through conference programs that are offered.

And now, with most trade shows and other industry gatherings canceled at least through mid-year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, how can you keep your 2020 marketing plans relevant and thriving?

Well, there is hope, and I have drawn a list of the top five things your company can do to get in front of customers, even if your favorite show is canceled or postponed. Read on

Look at your content calendar to ramp up blogs, contributed articles and social media.

Your customers and partners are already online and consuming content, and that may increase as they are now in online meetings much more frequently and, yes, we all search while on these calls.

What can you be doing to meet the needs of your audience that is hungry for news beyond the coronavirus? Or those who are looking for solutions that can help their company and its workforce during these difficult times that is coronavirus-related?

Think blog series instead of a single blog, a recurring column instead of a one-off, and social content that reflects both your expertise as well as the nature of what else is happening in the world.

Start to increase your engagement by increasing your volume, and do not forget to repurpose, repurpose, repurpose that valuable content.

Do not forget PR. The publications that cover your industry are not going away. If anything, they are hungry for non-coronavirus news than ever before. So, it is OK to pitch your ideas and expect coverage when warranted.

According to Joe Panettieri at *Channele2e*, "At this moment, I believe it's very important for your staff, partners, customers and the technology industry as a whole to see that we're all finding ways to move forward during the pandemic."

One big tip: do not stretch to make your news coronavirus-related if it is simply not. Be true to your company's core

storylines and if a coronavirus story emerges, the share it with tact.

Host a virtual event. This event can be a webinar or a mini-event with partners.

The important part is that you are still connecting throughout this period with both existing customers and potential ones.

If anything, companies need technology now more than ever as they attempt to navigate the virtual workplace world.

Make sure your event is topical, even if it trumps regularly scheduled programs. Businesses want reassurances as well as new information that the technology path they have gone down in the past can work seamlessly with new equipment and SaaS that they are currently implementing.

Ramp up your videos. An event does not have to be live or an hour-long to have impact.

If your business has a clear connection to work-at-home environments or ecommerce, then it is a great time to push videos out there that highlight your company's successes.

If not, video is still a great way to engage your audience in new ways. Keep videos short, no more than 90 seconds, and you will see their engagement rise.

Pump up the volume on social media. The old 80-20 rule still applies: write 80 percent about industry news and 20 percent about your company.

That 80 percent can be difficult to find in a news cycle focused squarely on coronavirus, but work hard to find those nuggets and share with your audience.

Now is a good time to increase your engagement as well.

If you were posting five times a week, try twice a day, and so on.

After all, with the tips above, you will have plenty of content from which to choose.

Bonus tip: rethink your SEO. When an event occurs that so dramatically captures the news cycle as the coronavirus has, the way people search online may also be changing.

It is a good time to review and, if necessary, adjust your search engine optimization efforts so that your keywords are still in line with what people are searching.

It is likely just a slight tweak, but you definitely want to make sure prospects are not hearing more from your competitors than they are from you.

WHILE TRADE SHOWS will remain a critical part of marketing going forward, it is important to understand the alternatives to meeting face to face.

By honing some new skills, marketers may find a new method that works as well as or better than trade shows.

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