

MARKETING

## 3 marketing must-haves to prepare for a renewed COVID-19 lockdown

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By **Shahla Hebets**

We know it could happen. We knew that we would see the COVID-19 coronavirus cases increase as U.S. states reopened, and that is what we have seen.

Still much is unknown, but one thing is for sure: If the cases continue to swell and another lockdown or quarantine occurs, luxury brands will need to be prepared.

While this certainly is not a pleasant concept, brands that have a playbook ready to implement will undoubtedly fare far better and will greatly benefit from some well-thought preparation.

What that playbook entails will be based on many factors, but below are the top three marketing must-haves for a luxury brand's lockdown-ready list.

### Meaningful matters

First, reexamine your content strategy and see if it accurately reflects the sentiment of the era. If it does not, nix it, and focus on real-time storytelling.

Creating meaningful communication with your audience now will deliver tomorrow's rewards. This is not the time for brand-speak. This is most certainly not the time to toot your own horn or to try to be "woke."

We all saw **L'Oreal** get Twitter-shamed when it appeared hypocritical in its support of Black Lives Matters after firing influencer Munroe Bergdorf for speaking out against racism a few years earlier.

Now is the time to be intentional.

If your brand has been a champion of inclusively, then by all means share it, but remember to speak authentically and address your customers' needs and concerns.

If you have a great sustainability story, tell it and inspire your community.

Provide information that meets the appetite of the audience and engages their senses. The customer does not want a confusing laundry list of initiatives he or she wants to know that your brand truly values its customers and their values.

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The story of your brand's contributions is a compelling one. It is not just a statistic sheet. Bring that story to your customers and see your engagement and revenues increase.

Own it

In the age of the influencer, it is somewhat easy to borrow followers. But your influencers are not your brand, and they lack the realism that this period demands.

Use your own media to connect with your customers. Web sites have greater functionality than ecommerce alone, albeit that is a critical one. They can tell your story without being drowned out by conflicting offers, messaging and the crowded marketing noise of social media.

That does not mean that social media is abandoned, but advertising dollars should be reallocated to support genuine business-owned media marketing.

Personalize the experience of your brand on your Web site, create emails that enlighten instead of sell, and craft unique content that adds value to your customers' lives.

DIY videos, streaming series and even custom publications should all be considered with the winners being implemented.

According to a recent [Forrester study](#), consumers during the pandemic are looking for entertainment, information and adventure to fill the social void.

Especially during another social-distancing lockdown, customers do not want to be sold to they wish to be part of something bigger or greater than themselves. They wish to be part of the communal collective.

Once they are part of your tribe, they want to buy from your brand and they will.

We must get away from the idea that conversion comes before the relationship.

Curators dream

If consumers are shuttered back indoors again, then brands will need to step it up to drive revenues.

Brands will do themselves a huge favor by giving creative product managers the go-ahead to create customized packages or kits that speak to the "new normal" of customer acquisition.

Brands should begin by curating complementary products that address the at-home needs of their consumers. Perhaps a quarantine picnic basket, complete with small-batch cheeses, delicate sweets, cocktail kit, blush pillow and luxurious blanket, accompanied by a great home-style recipes cookbook.

If this does not have Williams-Sonoma written all over it, then it should.

While this may feel a bit daring, the truth is that the ability to anticipate and meet the needs of your customers has never been more pronounced.

Now is the time to think deeply about your customers' want list and get to work.

Bring appealing products together in a way that feels special and indulgent. Associate your brand with the relevancy of now while also delighting the customer during this difficult phase.

It is a good reminder for brands that customer-first brands earn the benefit of customer loyalty, and market shares are gained when the going gets tough.

IN A POST-PANDEMIC world, relationships are everything.

The best way for brands to get in front of another lockdown is to understand your customers' needs and wants, and provide them.

Too many brands think the way forward is more of the same, a pause or a more compelling offer, but that is not how legacy brands are built.

Legacy brands read the environment. They adapt and grow as their customers evolve. They embrace the moment while planning for the future.

The sooner that luxury brands understand that, the more prepared they will be.

The sooner they can adapt to an elevated customer-centric approach, the earlier they can insulate themselves from the winds of uncertainty.

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