



SOCIAL MEDIA

Now Is the Time to Revise Your Social Media Strategy

BY KATHI KRUSE

The COVID-19 virus turned our world upside down.

Things continue to change rapidly. It's hard to know what to do. Everyone is feeling anxious – including your customers and community. It's definitely not business as usual.

Which makes now a good time to reconsider your social media strategy.

While social distancing is a good idea in real life, it's not required on social media.

In extraordinary times, social media can do magical things.

Whether you're a large business, a small dealership or a solopreneur, if you lean on social media to build your business, you're going to need

to tap into that magic.

Some companies have been using content to help their customers navigate the new world of COVID-19.

The pandemic has impacted every business and every person, without exception. There are many questions and still not a lot of answers.

If you can help your customers in some way, you'll be mitigating some the challenges they're experiencing. And that means a lot.

So what can you do?

The move to trust content is crucial: Review the content you've been publishing and come at it with a different goal: trust.

The traditional social media content rule remains. Provide your audience with content that educates, entertains or inspires.

That doesn't always require a sales angle such as a link back to your website, special offer or sign-up form. In fact, be selective about what you promote.

Instead, build trust.

Digital marketing pioneer Ann Handley calls that approach, "Slow down so you can speed up."

Slow down, she said, "to build momentum for what truly matters long term." Consider "the next 10 years, not the next 10 months or 10 days or 10 minutes." ➡

You are being given the chance to slow down, reassess, reconsider and determine a different and perhaps better path forward.

The goal is to build a solid foundation – a more sustainable and sane momentum.

Re-examine your tone:

Have you been blasting one-way messages without much response?

Time to stop that in general, but even moreso now. Change to a more empathetic tone in your content.

Be open to trust-building tactics:

Discuss ideas with your team or social media manager about what you can do personally and/or what the business can do to support your community online and offline.

Re-think subject matter:

Everyone is struggling with coronavirus-related issues. When you hear about something that will help people, publish a post, write a blog post or record a video letting people know about it.

Provide tips specifically related to your customer's needs, especially as they relate to your business.

Pro Tip: Don't publish posts that make blatant marketing statements about the pandemic. Exploiting it will have a very negative affect on your brand and position in the community. You don't want to appear to be taking advantage of a crisis.

Show up consistently: In this time of social distancing, take the chance to reconsider how you've been showing up.

Have your profiles been vacant lately?

Recommit to consistent participation on the platforms where your customers and community congregate. To use a phrase I learned from Simon Sinek, "Show up to give, not get."

Choose a platform where you can go a little deeper:

In times of uncertainty, it can help you feel better to be more real and more authentic. I love the idea of a regular newsletter like Ann Handley's *Total Annarchy* (annhandley.com/newsletter).

You can deepen your existing relationships and invite your social media followers who might be craving deeper connections, too.

Be transparent and communicate regularly with customers:

People are looking for answers to questions they have about what you sell, and existing customers want to know you're going to be there when they need you.

People need to know the truth, no matter what it is.

Let customers and prospects know:

- If your hours have changed or if you're selling by appointment only.
- That you've distributed hand sanitizer throughout your store.
- How the situation is affecting your business.

Make sure those updates are communicated clearly on your social media, website and Google My Business page.

Being up front about your issues helps mitigate long-term damage to your business and brand.

It's OK to be the bearer of bad news as long as you're truthful, forthright and willing to admit when you misspoke. That's true leadership.

Review your Google and Facebook ads: If your business is changing its service model, such as selling online only, make sure you don't have any ads that encourage store visits.

FYI, Google and Facebook have denied any type of "coronavirus specials" ads.

Pro Tip: Keep an eye on your Facebook and Instagram ads comments sections. No matter who you are or what you sell, you are more likely to get negative comments now just because there's increased anxiety everywhere.

Allow yourself some room to cope: None of us are perfect. You're going to need a daily practice to keep things in perspective. Yoga, meditation, walks in nature, hanging out with animals and volunteering are my go-tos.

Without some sort of coping mechanism, your business will suffer. Make the commitment to yourself right now so the anxiety and panic around you doesn't sink in.

Don't be afraid to share your challenges with others: Keeping up a facade is exhausting. It's OK to show your struggles, because we all have them.

I've also seen some of the greatest solutions to problems come from social media threads.

No matter what happens in the coming weeks and months, we know it won't last forever.

Revise your social media strategy now so customers and prospects know you care – and that you'll still be here when restrictions are lifted. ■



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