



BUSINESS AT A

# Distance





# Business at a Distance

## NAVIGATING WHAT COMES NEXT

The world is wholly different, and as a business owner or operator, you are already adjusting the way to go to market, serve your clients or customers, and message them with relevance. Surely your business model has been impacted and the unanswered questions are lingering. In this e-Book, our marketing professionals provide insight on what's occurred and how it is changing the business landscape. We'll offer tips on how to serve your customers in new ways, and offer suggestions about messaging, affordable marketing solutions, and things to think about as we navigate what's next.

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HOW THE BUSINESS MODEL HAS CHANGED

# REFRAMING THE PRO FORMA

You've been changed as a consumer. Though you may be thinking only of your business during this time, reflection on your own approach to consumer goods may provide the answers you seek as a business owner. Have you been to the grocery, or are you getting consumable goods shipped or delivered? Are you making purchases online rather than in person, or have you opted to simply delay purchase? Services that once took you to a doctor's office for person-to-person care might now be done virtually. Your own experience is the basis for change in your business.

While we all want things to feel familiar again, reality dictates that change will be substantive and, depending on Stay at Home orders in your state, may affect your business more than others. We suggest beginning with a written business model to identify changes required. This Assumed, forecasted, or informal information presented in advance of "actuals" will help you to predict adjustments before they occur, and will provide a black and white view of what's most important.

In the model above, the restaurant's capacity has been split in half, as importance of social distancing is observed. Because it is unlikely that fully half of the restaurant might be full at any given time, on site meals represent only 40% of the total business and, likely 25% of pre-pandemic numbers. With delivery and carryout requiring disposable containers,

## SAMPLE BUSINESS MODEL

RESTAURANT	PRE-PANDEMIC	POST-PANDEMIC
Capacity	150	75
On Site Meals Avg	98%	40%
Delivery Meals	0	10%
Carryout Meals	2%	30%
Sanitation (Labor/Products)	\$	\$\$
Single Use Containers	\$	\$\$
Avg Guest Check	\$	\$

silverware, bags, and even more containers for sauces and dips, the margins for these meals is reduced by an approximate \$2 per customer, shrinking critical funds for fixed costs, like lighting, equipment, and rented space.

**FORBES HAS MADE 9 PREDICTIONS FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD.** [READ ON >](#)



Sanitation expenses increase dramatically, as these practices are increased in scope and frequency, potentially requiring dedicated staff. But the average guest check hasn't changed at all. In this model, one might consider:

**Offering full carryout meals** for a family of four could positively impact the guest check average and number of single-use disposables are required. (Think roast chicken dinner, or half a salmon with sides.)

**Get creative.** Customer meal planning is made simple if your chef develops a box of pre-prepared goods for re-heating at home throughout the week. While this might change the business model of carryout altogether, it may help you to advance relationships with families that wish to support you but have yet to fully adopt dining out options.

**Investigate the expense of delivery both to the customer and to your business.** Delivery services are a good option but may come at a premium to one or both of you. Is it more or less expensive for you to staff this service? If you prefer to use a third party to deliver, how can you partner with them for greater visibility? Upserve reported that pre-pandemic, 1 in 4 customers were spending more on off-premise orders, and 33% are willing to pay a higher delivery fee for faster service. With the dramatic increase in those using these services, test whether strategic upselling during the order placement impacts guest check averages.

### Does your bar or restaurant offer swag?

Consider a tongue-in-cheek message that honors those that are still dining out, even if "in" their own home, or package glassware and growlers into a carryout option.

As a final step, **work backward from the new capacity and average guest counts** and check averages to determine if all items require re-pricing, or just premium items get a bump.

Similarly, this model works for retail establishments as well:

## SAMPLE BUSINESS MODEL

RETAILER	PRE	POST
Capacity	25	8
Avg Transactions/Day	30	4
E-Commerce Trans/Day	100	15
Sanitation (Labor/Products)	\$	\$\$
Avg Transaction	\$\$	\$

NEED MORE RESTAURANT IDEAS?  
FAST COMPANY PUBLISHED  
SOME **CREATIVE TIPS** FROM NICK  
KOKONAS, CO-OWNER OF THE  
ALINEA GROUP.

For retailers, foot traffic is often but not always key. However, the ability to service clients of a fashion retailer when only 10 are allowed in the store at a time means that fewer team members are free to fill phone or online orders.

The labor must be adjusted to serve in-store and online clients simultaneously and by a smaller crew.

**Offering bundled inventory items** may improve the average items per cart or transaction. Best when used to provide a perceived value on higher tag items, consider pairing belts, shoes and bags. Or crossing departments, by pairing jewelry with fragrance, or makeup with accessories.

**Examine your exchange or return policies**, knowing that the next customer will be unlikely to purchase something tried on by another. Consider measuring clients and offering a bespoke experience based on their measurements to limit these concerns.

**Progressive benefits for frequent purchases is an option.**

While some retailers opt for discounts at increasing percentages for loyal customers, consider that certain thresholds might “unlock” opportunities, like premium upgrades, for instance, or overnight shipping.

Of the retail marketplace post-pandemic, Retail Touchpoints wrote,

*“During these challenging times, it's important to remember that retail does not and will never exist in a vacuum, and neither do retail customers — many of whom don't know where to turn if their long-time neighborhood stores close their doors. This presents an opportunity for B&M retail to win back the loyalty of shoppers that once belonged to their direct competitors, as well as online-only merchants, if they move quickly, cater to convenience, and focus on consumer behavior.”*



HOW THE BUSINESS MODEL HAS CHANGED

## COST OF GOODS, THEN AND NOW

When The World Bank writes of the global economic shockwave that is the Q2 and Q3, 2020, they are quick to describe that energy and metals commodities are the most affected by the pause in economic activity and the “serious global slowdown that is anticipated.” Further, supply chain disruptions and government oversight and restriction of exports or stockpiles also raise concern. “In addition to the devastating human toll, the economic impact of the pandemic will dampen demand and cause supply disruptions, negatively affecting developing countries that rely heavily on commodities,” said Ceyla Pazarbasioglu, World Bank Group Vice President for Equitable Growth, Finance & Institutions.

But in our localized worlds reliant on the next customer in the door or the next client cancellation, positivity balanced with prudent planning is key. To that end, we must all examine closely how the costs associated with a now-open-but-still-cautious business environment will impact our costs of doing business.

OSHA writes,

*“Employers should adapt infection control strategies based on a thorough hazard assessment, using appropriate combinations of engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment (PPE) to prevent worker exposures.”*

### SANITATION

At home, masks, gloves, wipes, and hand sanitizer aren't free, and your consumables budget is likely feeling the hit. Multiply that by an office of 50 or 100, and the impact is palpable. Beyond availability of these products, we must have an appropriate flow of these goods into our office or workplace environments to protect employees and customers alike. Consider housing enough for a 30 day supply, ordering at the 2 week mark and building to a “par level.”

### CLEANING LABOR

Staffing for the sole purpose of sanitation and safety may be a trend unique to this pandemic. With what frequency are surfaces wiped and cleaned? More important, how are you communicating these activities to your clientele? Certainly this work goes beyond the pre-virus initiatives of a clip-board record. You may opt for a third party vendor to support these initiatives, bringing with its contract a new fee structure and expense. Whatever you do, Standard Operating Procedures (or SOPs) should be written and followed.

DOWNLOAD THE APRIL 2020  
COMMODITY MARKETS OUTLOOK  
FORM THE WORLD BANK [HERE](#)

## TRAINING

How your staff engages the public is not only different, it's regulated by executive order. Communication of new expectations around hand washing, site sanitation, customer interaction and safety practices will take time and effort. Clear accountability should be stated verbally and built into handbooks or other governing documents.

## INSURANCE

Does your insurance coverage extend to new sanitation practices? How has your liability changed based on what is now true of our shared world? How has your unemployment coverage changed in light of the number of participants? While costs may not go up, you will want to review how your coverage relates to what is true today, not just what is true when you opened the doors to your business.

## SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION

With increased demand and some businesses critical to the preparation, packaging and distribution of goods still closed, there will be a log jam. Identifying when this will occur by anticipating slow delivery or absent goods and having a backup plan is critical. Being prepared will take time and investment but will prevent or limit disruptions in the services you provide to your own customers.

## ON THE JOB MEDICAL SCREENING

CNBC reported that on-the-job medical screening such as temperature checks and antibody tests may be a reality for back-to-workers. "And in many cases it's already happening: To combat the spread of coronavirus among essential workers, some of the biggest employers in the country, including Meijer, Amazon, Walmart, Home Depot and Starbucks have begun taking the temperatures of their employees before they are allowed to work.

But not all is doom and gloom. In late April, CNBC reported on 13 perhaps surprising changes we may experience following the pandemic, from unexpected co-worker closeness to home office stipends, and even a more equitable work environment.

# 13 WAYS THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC COULD FOREVER CHANGE THE WAY WE WORK

1. WORKING IN AN OFFICE COULD BECOME A STATUS SYMBOL
2. MOST MEETINGS COULD BE REPLACED BY EMAIL AND IM
3. IT COULD BE THE END OF BUSINESS TRAVEL AS WE KNOW IT
4. OFFICE BUILDINGS COULD BECOME 'ELABORATE CONFERENCE CENTERS'
5. MANDATORY ON-THE-JOB MEDICAL SCREENING COULD BECOME THE NORM
6. COWORKERS COULD BECOME EVEN CLOSER
7. FASHION-READY FACE MASKS COULD BECOME A WARDROBE STAPLE
8. STANDARD 9-TO-5 OFFICE HOURS COULD BECOME A THING OF THE PAST
9. HOME OFFICE STIPENDS COULD BECOME A COMMON PERK
10. THE WORKPLACE COULD BECOME MORE EQUITABLE FOR WOMEN
11. MIDDLE MANAGEMENT POSITIONS COULD BE CUT FOREVER
12. AUTOMATION OF REPETITIVE JOBS COULD BE ACCELERATED
13. THERE COULD BE AN INCREASED DEMAND TO CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

SOURCE: CNBC.COM

## THE DECISION JOURNEY

The words “sales funnel” is business jargon at this point. For years, maybe decades, the illustration of the broadest lead generating activities refining slowly to the sale, was broadly accepted as the accurate tactical representation. The funnel itself is a dinosaur, and its standards of a linear path to conversion are no longer realistic. But viewed as the decision journey, it still holds water.

The path to conversion is no longer linear. Especially true post-crisis, when all of us spent countless hours with our technology, constantly hit refresh on news sites, and grasped for good news and the bad equally. It's as unlikely that anyone has gone to YouTube and watched a single video as it is that you're interested in having a house party right now. Axia has reported,

*“Studies have shown that consumers now travel through most of the sales cycle before ever talking to a salesperson. In fact, more than 60 percent of the buyer's journey is digital. Also, a whopping 84 percent of CEOs and VPs report that they use social media to make purchasing decisions.”*

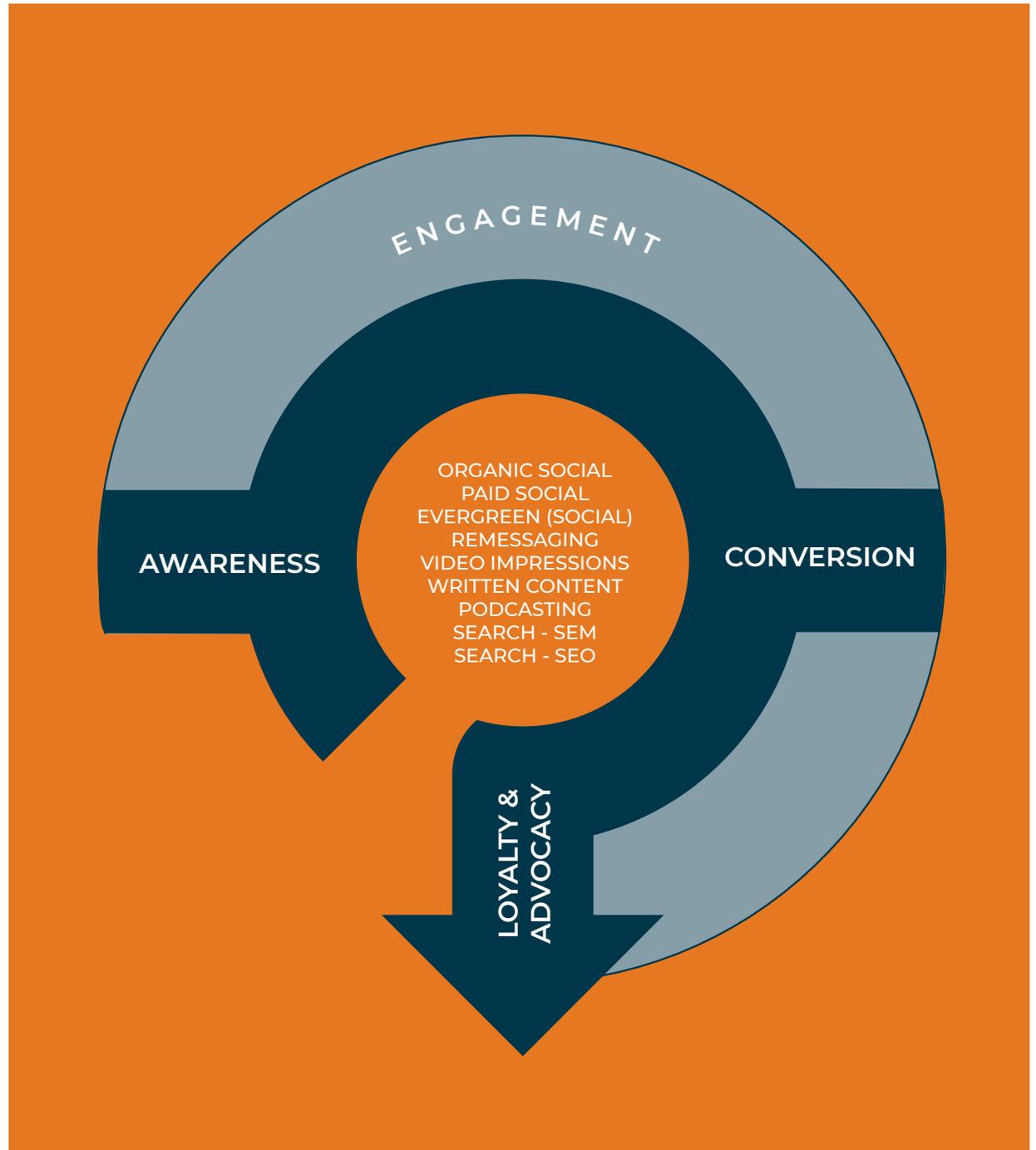


## EXAMPLE

If you've ever watched a series of videos on YouTube to learn how to use a product before you bought it, you understand. Those videos were likely crafted by a) individuals that were faced with the same buying decision you are, b) professionals that feel compelled to share their own expertise or identify a good buy to their own clients, c) the guy that built the thing he's really proud of, and lastly d) the company that sells that product. Maybe you visited that product's website or social feed. Maybe more than one competing company's site or feed. You may have also crowd sourced a recommendation on Facebook, or asked a friend that recently bought something similar. All of these are evidence that you no longer see an ad and immediately move to make a purchase. You traversed the internet. You searched. You asked. You searched again. And just like that, the interconnecting feeds, shared videos, search ads (or SERPS) influenced your decision. You may have even done this while in the store itself.

The path to decision is riddled with content streams and social media and is influenced by potentially hundreds of factors. No business is in control of every mention of their product, and every stage of the funnel.

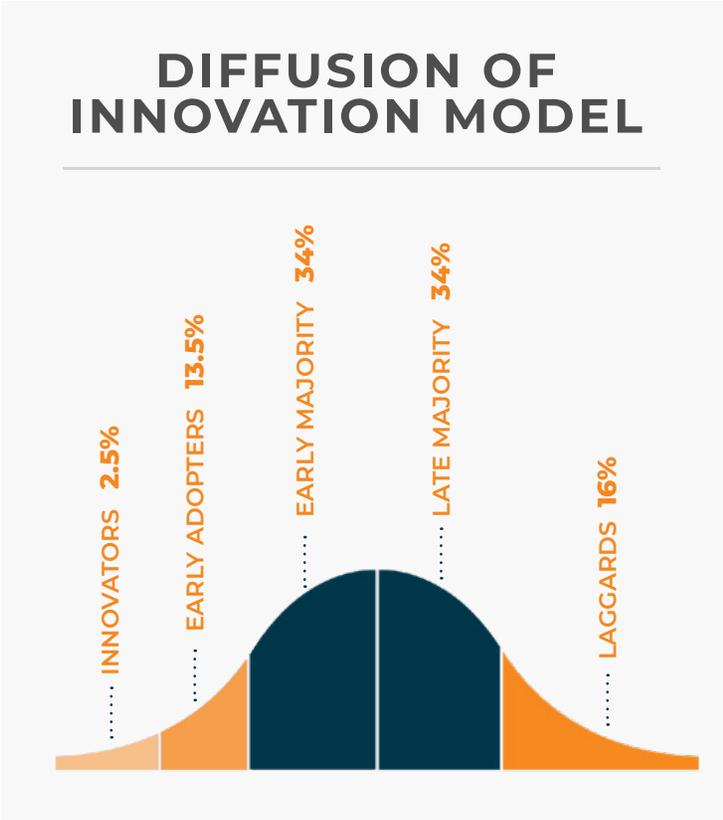
So instead, let's think about that funnel as a consumer journey through stages of the sale. And let's look at what can be done to influence those stages.





CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT THROUGH RE-ENTRY

# MODELING ADOPTION



Diffusion of innovation is a theory that seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread. Everett Rogers, a professor of communication studies, popularized the theory in his book *Diffusion of Innovations* first published in 1962. Now in its fifth printing, the idea clearly stuck. This model, used to describe how behavior adapts to change and innovation, might also be worthy of review when understanding the shift from crisis to “business at a distance.”

Adoption of a new behavior doesn’t happen simultaneously for all of us. In this social system, and particularly in light of an international health crisis, businesses must recognize that any customer could find themselves at a crossroads to learn,

understand and accept new social norms, and therefore may have a different capacity to buy, convert, or close a deal than his neighbor.

According to Boston University’s School of Public Health, “There are five established adopter categories, and while the majority of the general population tends to fall in the middle categories, it is still necessary to understand the characteristics of the target population. When promoting an innovation, there are different strategies used to appeal to the different adopter categories.” The following chart offers the basic definition of each stage, and provides possible insights from our marketing professionals on influencing or messaging each.

## **INNOVATORS | 2.5%**

Those that wish to be the first to try, the test case, the guinea pig. Those that thrive in a “beta” environment, these individuals are willing to take risks, develop ideas, and need little to appeal to a fresh idea.

It's possible that your innovators are already your champions. This small but mighty group is the one to be using your services throughout the pandemic in whatever shape they took. They could be your top fans on Facebook, or key individuals engaging your brand online. You probably know their names. Reach out, inviting them to engage as brand ambassadors, to create more innovators like them. Consider using this group to initiate your look alike audience group, knowing that their online behaviors could offer up some key characteristics you want to harness.



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## **EARLY ADOPTERS | 13.5%**

Your early adopters and those who represent opinion leaders and leadership roles. They embrace opportunity and are agents of change. They are already aware of the need for innovation, so educating them on the concern and fix will take less energy, as they will consume content to inform themselves without needing to be asked to do so. This group requires little convincing.

Because this group is so receptive, they will consume your content feed at a highly engaged pace. Be sure that there are mixed media types so that this group doesn't grow weary or even bored with your messaging. Try downloads, videos, infographics and sponsor content, in addition to the impressions pointed strategically to get them to these artifacts. Use all of these pieces to answer the questions that appear in frequent searches, and be sure they are keyword rich (but not keyword stuffed.) Invite sharing, and consider this group (along with Innovators) to be premium subscribers or loyalists. Again, a group ripe for look alike audience development.





### **EARLY MAJORITY | 34%**

While not often comprised of leaders in industry or change, this group is comfortable being on the cutting edge, and doesn't lose faith through 'bugs in the system.' This group is likely one that sought out opportunities through the pandemic for new ways to consume services or products, but may have read about other's experiences before leaping immediately to do it themselves.

Strategies to reach Early Majority includes success stories and evidence that an innovation is working. While you might believe testimonials belong in the 'advocacy stage' of a sales funnel (see previous article), because this audience must be met where they are mentally/emotionally in their adoption, this tactic works well here. The early majority will want all of the evidence and explanation noted in the Early Adopters stage, but will respond well to influencer



or crowd sourced information or product placements. Because they need to know the innovation has found success for others, the more crowd generated content the better for this group (and the next.)

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### **LATE MAJORITY | 34%**

This group comprises your skeptics, those that will adopt only after "proven" success. The late majority responds well to statistical elements. How many have tried and succeeded? How many have tried and failed? What is the statistical relevance to them? Producing this material in bite-sized and easily digestible ways is crucial. They may not read a whole whitepaper to get the story. But a high frequency of statistics served in visual format throughout a social feed just might do the trick.



### **LAGGARDS | 16%**

Bound by traditions of the past, this is the most conservative group. While they are not actively working against the innovation, they may not be sold on the need for iteration or change. In the case of today's business and health landscape, they may simply be those in the highest risk groups, unwilling to accept risk, no matter how slight. These laggards should be treated carefully and consciously, in a manner that accepts their nervous or even unwilling adoption. This group needs to feel heard. Just how are you treating highly sensitive groups? What special hours might be available for them, or needs that you can identify and articulate? Message this group carefully, using highly emotional words that offer support and guidance, and share in their concerns, rather than magnify or marginalize them.

[READ MORE ON THE DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION HERE](#)



CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

## MAKING USE OF DATA YOU ALREADY OWN

Our former selves took a lot of things for granted. We've spent the last three months or more yearning for that time when things felt familiar, when being in a public place was safe, and when our teams would high, five, shake hands, and sit around the same table. We all know that whatever comes next isn't going to be like what was true at a time we'll call "before." But a few truths still exist, and one of them is data.

**WHAT YOU ALREADY OWN IS MORE VALUABLE  
THAN ANY LIST YOU CAN BUY NOW.**

Your CRM, or Customer Relationship Management tool, is the most valuable piece of technology you have right now. Forbes

said, "At its core, a CRM tool creates a simple user interface for a collection of data that helps businesses recognize and communicate with customers in a scalable way.

*"At its core, customer relationship management is simple. However, it can be implemented in a huge array of methods: websites, social media, telephone calls, chat, mail, email and various marketing materials can all be integrated into a CRM solution. Due to CRM's diversity, it doesn't only benefit larger businesses -- using and maintaining a CRM tool is the basis for a scalable sales and marketing system. Any company will benefit from maintaining a record of which conversations, purchases and marketing material can be associated with leads and customers."*

When used properly, your own customer relationship management (CRM) data is one of your most valuable assets. It should be used to help you better understand who your existing customers are, their definable attributes and characteristics, what they're buying, and why. Then, your marketing partner can turn what you know of your best current customers, into more customers with their most desirable characteristics. All this to say, the information that you have stored about your current customers is more valuable today than the day you collected it. Together, your CRM and site traffic analytics tell the story of your ideal customers, and the journey they take to their purchase decisions. Knowing this information simplifies the targeting of those exact individuals, and finding those just like them.

When you spend time with information like your CRM, you get to make decisions based on data, not your gut. Google Analytics information can support customer data with a deep understanding of where your sales come from and how to harness the power of your strongest conversions. With the help of our marketing pros, you have these insights and more, provided in real-time dashboards and other means, with experts to help you understand what you see.





CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

## TRACKING AND BUILDING YOUR AUDIENCE

*“In these uncharted waters, where the tides continue to shift, it’s not surprising that analytics, widely recognized for its problem-solving and predictive prowess, has become an essential navigational tool. Analytics supports numerous urgent tasks facing businesses today: forecasting demand, identifying potential supply-chain disruptions, targeting support services to at-risk workers, and determining the effectiveness of crisis intervention strategies, to name a few.”*

– McKinsey.com

At Mlive Media Group, we often use the automotive purchase as an example of a linear sales experience. In this instance, we’ll use the purchase of an automobile to illustrate the trackability of the stages of a marketing campaign. Most all of us have bought a car in our lifetime, after all.

MARKETING IMPRESSIONS LEAD TO DEALER WEBSITE TRAFFIC.

THAT SITE TRAFFIC NAVIGATES THE SITE TO THE DESIRE VEHICLE, PERHAPS REVIEWING SEVERAL COMPARATIVELY.

ON ONE OF THOSE PAGES, THE VISITOR USES A FORM FILL TO REQUEST A CALL OR MORE INFORMATION.

THE DEALER USES THIS INFORMATION TO CHAT, TEXT, OR COMMUNICATE WITH THE POTENTIAL BUYER, AND SET A TEST DRIVE APPOINTMENT.

THE PROSPECT VISITS AT THE TIME SET, TEST DRIVES THE VEHICLE, AND LIKES IT. HE OR SHE MAY TEST DRIVE SEVERAL FROM OTHER DEALERS OR LOTS.

THE PROSPECT BUYS THE CAR.

In this illustration, what might the auto dealer be tracking? Nearly everything. Listed here are a few examples.

- NUMBER OF SITE VISITORS
- NUMBER OF VEHICLE DESCRIPTION PAGE VISITORS
- NUMBER OF FORM FILLS AS A PERCENTAGE OF SITE TRAFFIC OR IMPRESSIONS ON VEHICLE DESCRIPTION PAGES
- NUMBER OF TEST DRIVES RESULTING FROM THE FORM FILLS
- NUMBER OF PURCHASES OCCURRING FROM THOSE TEST DRIVES
- THE PERCENTAGE OF DECAY BETWEEN EACH STEP IN THE LIST SHOWN HERE.

Effectively, the dealer knows that an increase in visits to a vehicle description page will lift the total sale in the end, and likely knows the percentage of those conversions. By tracking every step of the process, he or she knows where to turn a dial to generate more of any one thing. More advertising of a certain vehicle, for instance, may lead to increased visits to that page. But these analytics reflect just the stages of the purchase, not the marketing itself. What follows is a list of trackable elements critical to understanding how your marketing is working.

## SEARCH

When working in Search Engine marketing or optimization, SEO is like paying a mortgage. You are earning a tiny sliver of equity with every payment. SEM is more like renting. You won't have it forever, but you have what you need right now, until you choose to do something different. For the purpose of brand equity, you might track the effectiveness of SEO. For the purpose of site traffic, you'd track the effectiveness of the keywords, pay per click expenses to results, etc. You should know which words are driving attention to your site, and use that knowledge to craft better content, or refine your audience targeting. Which of the five search ads are receiving the most clicks and why? Drop the duds, and emulate the qualities of your highest converter.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social platforms are about engagement. You'll want a blend of organic social (items that are posted in your feed and aren't boosted or advertised) and paid social (anything that you place to be served to a specific audience, and pay to be seen.) A good mix will keep your audience engaged. All paid ads and they might feel like all they know of you is the thing you want from them. Analysis should be centered around understanding what visuals and paid tactics are driving the most engagements. If you are running a lead generating campaign in Facebook, how many conversions did you receive from ad A versus ad B? As

with Search and other tactics, drop the underperformers and build new creative with all the attributes the top performer(s) exhibit. Note the difference in engagement when the artifact is static, gif animation, or video, as this will also change the outcomes. Over time, you'll understand better what resonates with your audience.

## DISPLAY

When tracking display, resist the urge to use the clicks as the basis for your analysis (except when optimizing creative). Instead, consider the coverage of your audience, and the frequency at which you have reached them. As one example, if you are an established brand in your community, you may choose to serve display at a lower frequency within 5 miles of your establishment, but double that frequency in zip codes further from your store. This could result in more traffic from out-lying areas, and maintaining the core. What percentage of devices in that area did you reach? How many times did they need to see you before taking action? All trackable.

Human behavior is skeptical. Most will, rather than clicking an ad, view an interesting ad, open a new window and type in the business name, looking for you or for the deal they just saw advertised. Because of this, direct traffic or organic search traffic will increase while you are running a display campaign, and you

should expect those areas to elevate. Heavy reliance on click numbers will leave you unfulfilled.

### AUDIENCE TARGETING

Review your results by audience segment. An assisted living facility might target both the recipients of their care as well as their adult children and these groups would respond to strikingly different messaging. An elderly woman will want to understand how this choice will affect their lifestyle. Her daughter will want to feel that she's making a good decision, despite difficult circumstances. Both are right, and deserve to hear something different from you.

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Whatever your marketing strategy grows to be in a post-covid world, you should keep these tips in mind:

### **ALIGN YOUR ANALYTICS WITH YOUR BUSINESS STRATEGY.**

Just as we illustrated above with the auto purchase, it's important to track the stages of conversion, but also the marketing that got them there. Understanding the landscape means a deep understanding of the means to the end, and how small changes might affect a single part of the conversion metrics. Exploit your ability to magnify or diminish the particular result.





### **REVIEW WHERE REPLICATION CAN HAPPEN IN ORDER TO SCALE.**

If you have 5 audience segments for your travel marketing, and target these five segments in a single geography with X results, for what additional geographies can you manifest same or similar results? Replication to reach scale works well when a tactic is proven in isolation and tested across geography or industries as targets. Careful with this, the same isn't true of audience segments (see the assisted living example above).

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### **GET DIFFERENT EMPLOYEE TYPES IN THE ROOM TO DEVELOP THE OVERALL STRATEGY.**

Rigidity or territorialism serves no purpose in an audience development strategy. Diversity does what it is intended to do: generate a stronger outcome based on many voices and often competing ideas. Find ways to test theories that are later put into practice based on outcomes determined in this room. McKinsey reported *“Prior to the crisis, our research showed that those realizing higher returns from AI and scaling it more broadly were much more likely than others to assemble cross-functional teams to solve business problems (62 percent, compared with 23 percent).”*

### **DON'T TRACK SOMETHING SIMPLY BECAUSE IT WOULD BE “COOL” TO KNOW.**

If you won't make a business or marketing decision based on the item you are tracking, don't track it. This will serve to keep your strategy and all its isolated parts nimble, and your business agile.

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### **FLATTEN THE HIERARCHY, AND CLEARLY DEFINE RESPONSIBILITY.**

Two areas will slow your campaign more than any other: designing visual assets by committee, and not knowing who has final say. Teams that try to develop in congress will quickly become discouraged. Flatten the hierarchy by trusting the members of your multi-disciplined teams to do what they do best. And know this: if you can't decide, launch both. Your audience is the (only) trusted authority on what resonates.

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### **STICK TO IT.**

Don't let fatigue adjust your campaign for you. Regular meetings for analysis of the data from your campaign are a great way to ensure steady check ins between team members and others, as well as keep those involved informed.

## AFFORDABLE OPTIONS FOR RIGHT NOW

Most of us are in this together, at home. “Can you hear me?” has become the standard “hello” for most of your meetings. Eating all the leftovers isn’t just for boomers anymore. And getting outside, watching the change of the season offers a simple pleasure more rewarding than in years’ past. While our existence has changed, so has the way we do business.

While glimmers of hope emerge around possible re-openings, it’s increasingly important that your steady communication with existing and potential customers remain genuine. Here are a few ideas for the week.

### **FOCUS ON BUILDING/MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS FIRST.**

Check in with your audience and customers. Working with the [CRM, Google Analytics and other data](#) you have, let them know you are (still) here to address any concerns they may have during this time and explain how you’re adapting your business to the current situation. Consider answering frequently searched questions about your product by reviewing new trends since the coronavirus emerged. Regular communications help—even passively—with brand recognition and trust. Sentiment during a time of scarcity, uncertainty, or even fear is precious. Don’t squander it! Email, digital display, blog posts and sponsored content are excellent ways to keep connected, through your customer’s regular internet



travels. (Like you, they are spending more time than ever online. Need a resource to help you get started? Try [this.](#))

### **MAXIMIZE THE EXPERIENCE OF CURRENT CUSTOMERS.**

Helping customers optimize their current solutions by offering add-ons or introducing them to complementary components will help reinforce your relationship with them. You could also stimulate repeat purchases, up-sell or cross-sell across your business lines. But more important than the sale is the ongoing connection, and their knowledge that you did more than was necessary to serve them.

### **CONSIDER HOW WHAT YOU SAY WILL INFLUENCE HIRES AND REHIRS POST-PANDEMIC.**

As the world comes back online, you'll need to rehire or re-employ. While perhaps not at pre-covid-19 levels immediately, you will need to adjust. What you say right now will influence the opinion of you by new recruits. 94% of job seekers are looking at your social media feed to help them form an opinion about your brand.

### **DON'T FORGET YOUR PROSPECTS.**

You may have a list already, using the CRM previously mentioned. Messaging this group with your content pieces in

varied formats (video, display, social, narrative) can improve recall, particularly if you give more than you ask. But you may want to consider ways to refresh this list as you come back online. One way

that has proven successful for our clients is to offer an enter-to-win, with an opt-in for more communication from your brand later. This method could add hundreds to your prospects lists without much effort.



Times are uncertain, to put it mildly. None of us understands yet the gravity of downstream effects there will be to COVID-19, but all of us are speculating. During this downturn, there are a few marketing tactics you can fall back on: trusty efforts that pay off for very little investment (if any). Here's a quick list:

### EMAIL

If you have an email list going, engage with your audience. Communicating about what is happening in the world and how it's affecting your business is step one. Be genuine but positive. Your customer base will care, even if they don't respond. You can use plain text emails, though the best option for this is an HTML based email, easily crafted with any number of email services like Constant Contact, Emma, or MailChimp. Need advice on getting started? Check this out. Want to talk to an expert for FREE ADVICE? We're doing that, too.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Now is the time that your voice will matter most. The time spent online during this crisis has skyrocketed, with person-to-

person contact being relegated to tagging friends, hashtags and posting. Organically, your brand's voice should be present in the feeds of your fans. Remember that email list above? Try list-matching for the first time. Or take advantage of Facebook's retargeting feature. This may be the right time to learn the difference between organic, boosting and paid advertising and put them to use for you.

### CONTENT

To support both of the above, consider what you'll say. Content comes in many forms, and it doesn't need to be hard. But the most important part is that you write it down and follow a plan. Get started with these tips for beginners.

We are all in this together. The MLive team is hearing first-hand how COVID-19 is rapidly changing how Michiganders are doing business. At MLive Media Group, we are working hard to adjust in light of the new needs we are hearing from our valued clients and others. This blog is one way we are responding.



**HAVE A PARTICULAR NEED?** Send us a note at [marketing@mlive.com](mailto:marketing@mlive.com)



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