



**HOW  
BRANDS AND  
MARKETERS CAN  
SURVIVE AND THRIVE**  
*during and after the Pandemic*

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**The COVID-19 pandemic has launched new routines and behaviors, from sheltering in place to social distancing, so it should be no surprise that consumer buying practices have also been affected.**

According to a recent brand consumer survey conducted by Valassis\*, 19% of consumers are feeling less brand loyal and are purchasing whatever brand is available, while 13% are taking the opportunity to discover new brands.

These behaviors will continue to evolve even when social distancing directives are reduced or lifted. The same study noted there will be a significant increase (16%) in buying online and picking up in store (BOPIS) practices along with a 20% increase of consumers saying they will purchase groceries online and have them delivered.

## **So what's in store for brands and marketers over the next few months?**


Prior to the pandemic, consumers took for granted the ease of acquiring most goods and services, while business have taken for granted a steady stream of potential consumers. Now, more than ever before, both the business owner and the consumer realize how much they need each other.

This is why any company, regardless of size, should be concerned less about the bottom line than about their greatest asset: people—both the employees who keep the business running and the customers who keep the business afloat.

Concern for these people starts with communication and connection. Ironically, it's during these current times when we've never been more connected while also being physically further apart like never before.

That means *community* is still possible. So although we're living through much uncertainty right now, we can take comfort in knowing our country will endure—as it has in recent decades through several challenges, both financial and social—with the following in mind:

- **We will recover and move forward.**
- **We will find a new normal.**
- **We will prosper as a nation and grow closer as a community, both in business and in our personal lives.**



In anticipation of that future, companies and their brands should understand how to apply their marketing skills over the next few months, not to *sell*...but to *connect*. This is a unique opportunity for marketers and a defining moment for brands. It is an opportunity to reinforce their missions and brand promises. In order to facilitate this effort, brands and marketers should follow three practical steps in what we see now as proven pathways in this altered environment.

## **These three steps are not only smart marketing and public relations—these are efforts also linked to what we understand now to be the “public good.”**

### **1. Be the Best Version of Who You Are**

Brands are more than a product or service. In their most ideal light, they represent our best values. For example, Google’s brand from inception has been built on the notion that the company will never be a partner to any harmful effort. In fact, their slogan evolved from “*Do no evil*” to the more proactive “*Do the right thing.*”

The most impressive efforts seen during our pandemic have been the selflessness of individuals rushing toward the fire despite instincts telling them to flee. While no amount of goodwill can match the work of the medical community, firefighters and police, and essential workers who leave for work every morning unsure of their own safety as they maintain our infrastructure, it doesn’t mean companies and their brands can’t make a difference.

Through media channels, companies detail how they are helping their own employees through this event. They can discuss plans for the future, including efforts to ensure short- and long-term safety once the economy and industry reboot. They can also stress how their best practices can offer employees and customers the comfort of knowing their products or services are safe and available when needed.

*Every informed post or advertisement is an opportunity to connect with audiences—customers and potential customers alike—to assuage fears, address concerns, and prepare for further unknowns.*



## 2. Offer Help with No Expectation of Reciprocity

Recalibrating industrial machinery to aid in creation of more PPE. Delivering free food from restaurants to healthcare workers in need. Offering recording and sharing software at no cost to teachers and students from K-12 schools and universities. These are just some of the ways companies in the last month are giving back to their communities and offering service with no expectation of profit or owed favors.

Not only are these worthy efforts, they're also good for business. Who's not going to remember the good deeds done by companies, especially those that didn't need to be asked? Furthermore, as long as these deeds are done altruistically, your brand will only benefit from them.

Whether your company is direct to consumer, such as restaurants and retail, or directly to business, like LinkedIn (offering free learning courses) and Adobe (providing Creative Cloud apps at no charge until May 31), every company has something of value they can offer to keep the world "normal."

Lastly, altruistic measures aligning with your existing mission provide the kind of brand reinforcement that could never be cultivated as well through any promotion, sales effort, or public relations push.

## 3. Prove to the Public Your Brand Can Speak to Them Individually

Marketing at its simplest is about connecting much more than direct selling—and regardless of whether you're business-to-business or business-to-consumer, you're marketing *human-to-human*. Built into the DNA of marketing vernacular is the need to persuade and guide customers to see beyond what they already think they know.

That's why the foundation of a communications strategy is "*it's not all about me.*" The Valassis study noted that 90% of consumers appreciate brands that go out of their way to deliver relevant and timely information during the coronavirus pandemic. Add to this the fact that brand postings on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have decreased nearly 25% over the last three weeks, greater audience engagement is possible, but only when the content is authentic and has consumer value.

Companies achieving successful engagement are using their advertising and social channels to produce ads, posts, and promotional materials designed to alleviate the fears of the community and speak in more personal ways about the pandemic, rather than just pushing the latest goods and services they're offering.



## An Opportunity for Future Success Begins Now

The “New Normal” is achieved through consistency. If companies and their brands can demonstrate they are listening to the concerns and emotions of their audiences—and can react appropriately and reliably, whether it’s through reassurance, clear direction, or traditional customer service—they can maintain, strengthen, and grow their customer base as the pandemic becomes a thing of the past.



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If you’re unsure how to move forward with your marketing strategy during this time, we’d like to offer you a free, no commitment, marketing consulting call—whether you need insight on how best to navigate your marketing, require help with strategic problem-solving, or need a sounding board to help generate ideas—we are here to help.

**Send us an email at [help@smmadvertising.com](mailto:help@smmadvertising.com) to schedule a 30-minute consultation on us.**

### About SMM Advertising

With our understanding of the importance of being found traditionally and digitally—and knowing how important it is to have a presence that breaks through the clutter—it’s SMM’s unique strategy and innovative creative approach that works, and ensures you get a maximum return on your investment.

Reference:

\*Latest Changes in Consumer Behavior Amid Covid-19, Valassis <https://bit.ly/3d48Pmz>

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