

A SHORT GUIDE TO

MARKETING IN A TOPSY-TURVY WORLD

FOR CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY PROVIDERS



MARKETING



Stay visible

With life being pretty topsy-turvy right now to say the least, there's every chance you've found yourself wondering what the 'rules' are when it comes to marketing your business.

The only rule you need to remember is to stay visible – because it's scary how quickly you can become INvisible.

When times are hard, people look to brands they trust for comfort and support – even to make them laugh!

And when all this is over, people won't remember everything you did, but they will remember how you made them feel.

So how can you keep your place in the hearts and minds of your customers?

"...people won't remember everything you did, but they'll remember how you made them feel."



STRENGTHEN YOUR BRAND



The need to have a strong, consistent brand has never been more important than it is right now.

If people are going to notice and remember you, now isn't the time to be diluting your brand – now's the time to strengthen it like never before!

Because the stronger your brand, the more it will increase the value of your business.

Your visual identity is what makes you instantly recognisable in a crowded marketplace, so while you might be putting things together quickly and at incredibly short notice, keep everything on-brand.

Make sure people see your brand at every touchpoint – from the visuals on your social media posts, to the backdrop in your online classes, and everywhere in-between.

"...the stronger your brand, the more it will increase the value of your business."



NURTURE

Nurture your existing customers

Your current customers are your biggest advocates and your best form of marketing, so support them as much as you can. Anything you can do to make them – and importantly, their children – feel loved and special will go a long way towards strengthening those relationships and building brand love.

So whether it's emailing weekly updates, responding to queries or concerns as quickly as possible, engaging in some way with everyone who comments on one of your social posts, or adding value with some extra activities – it's important that you find some time to nurture your existing customers.

“Your current customers are your biggest advocates and your best form of marketing...”

Share the love with prospective customers

Whether or not you're in a position to take on new customers right now, you should be thinking ahead to the day when you can.

Start building some brand love by thinking about what free resources you can offer them – perhaps you can create some activity sheets for them to download to keep little ones entertained, or give them access to some free music or videos that they can enjoy together. Whatever you can do, do it – don't forget, people won't remember everything you did, but they'll remember how you made them feel.

Show up in people's newsfeeds

Even though you might be using Facebook Groups much more now to engage with your customers, don't stop posting regular content across all your social platforms (and if time is an issue, then focus on those platforms you know work for your business).

Yes, you'll need to be sensitive to the general mood and nimble enough to react to sudden changes, so scheduling posts too far in advance probably isn't a good idea right now. But don't be afraid to lighten things with a bit of well-placed humour – people always appreciate things that make them smile.

If you can put any budget, no matter how small, into Facebook boosts or ads, then do it. Boosting your posts will make sure more people see your content, while ads will help increase your brand awareness among new audiences.

If you're not able to run your classes online, find other ways to be relevant on social media. People always enjoy seeing a friendly face pop up in a quick video, even if it's just to say 'hi!'. And while you might not be able to offer virtual classes, be creative and think about ways that little ones can still practise their skills at home, then share them regularly.

Finally, actively engaging with posts from other people and brands is a great way of helping increase your own brand's visibility – so schedule some time to regularly check the newsfeeds of your company pages and like, share and comment whenever you can.



“If you're not able to run your classes online, find other ways to be relevant on social media.”

Refine your messaging

You may be feeling like you can't compete with all the free online classes that are flooding our newsfeeds, which is why now is the time to really home in on the benefits of your own classes.

From structured progression and reward schemes, to the fact that your teachers know – and can personally interact with – every child and parent who takes part in your virtual classes, identify the key reasons why parents should choose you, then communicate them clearly.

Remember, parents will always want what's best for their children – so let them know that when all this is over, you'll still be here for them to provide some much-needed continuity.

Collaborate

Collaborating with other businesses is a great way to build relationships and reach new audiences, while sharing any associated costs. Think about businesses that could add value to your clients, and vice versa – then look at ways of creating some serious marketing noise through low-cost activities such as emails, social media and co-branded online promotions. It could be the start of a beautiful relationship that will open up lots of new opportunities that last far beyond this current situation!



SHOUT

Update your online listings

It's important to update your advertising listings with any new initiatives, such as virtual classes.

If you've created a landing page specifically for virtual classes, link to that instead of your homepage. You need to make it as easy as possible for customers to find what they're looking for (in as few clicks as possible).

"...make it as easy as possible..."

Shout about your 'good news' stories

While press coverage is never guaranteed, that doesn't mean you shouldn't still try. The press are hungry for good news, particularly around how businesses are adapting to support their local communities. So if you've a relevant story to tell, put together a press release that captures journalists' attention and send it to your local press. Always follow up with a phone call – because that's the first step to building what could be an invaluable relationship.



Don't neglect your website

If you're running online classes, update the homepage of your website to say so. And remember to update your meta description (the little snippet about you that shows up in Google), so that when people search for virtual classes, they'll know you're an option.

But if you're not able to run online activities, or find yourself with time on your hands for another reason, think about using that time to update your website.

When is the last time you looked at it as a potential customer?

They have a tendency to get a little bit unwieldy after a while (websites, not customers!). New pages get added over the years, pop-ups that seemed like a good idea can become a bit annoying, and before you know it both you and your website have lost your way a little.

So as well as checking that the messaging is on point, it's a good idea to take a step back and explore your site in the same way that a customer might. Think of what you do when you land on somebody else's site, then ask yourself:

- Does it still look appealing, or is it looking a bit dated?
- Does it display just as well on a mobile or tablet as it does on a desktop computer, and does it load quickly?
- Is the customer journey logical (ie. is all the information you need as a customer there, and is it where you'd expect to find it)?
- Is the copy well-structured and easy to read (so no unnecessary jargon)?
- When is the last time you did any keyword research?
- Do all your links still work?
- How easy is it for someone to do what you want them to do when they're there?



Now is not the time to be going quiet with your online marketing. Now is the time to really focus on building love for your brand with the people that matter.

So however you're planning on getting through the next few weeks or months, make sure you at least stay visible – and ideally, shine brighter than ever before!

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