

# *Staying connected* during **COVID-19**

Things to think about from a communications perspective...

STATION RD

# HOW YOU CHOOSE TO ACT & COMMUNICATE NOW WILL DEFINE YOUR FUTURE

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The importance of **staying connected** and **communicating effectively** whilst being mindful of the impact that the wrecking ball that is COVID-19 is having on your family, your team, your customers, frontline workers and everyone in your wider community cannot be underestimated. It's causing shock waves across the world and the inconsistent communications and ever-changing messaging coming from Government and a myriad of online sources does not seem to be bringing any clarity and comfort when we all need it most.

So, it is during this time that how you **choose to communicate**, what you **choose to share** and how you **choose to act** will define you and the futures of the ones around you (and yours too). Listening, supporting others, nurturing relationships, planning ahead and communicating as clearly as possible, will play a huge part in setting the foundations for the post COVID-19 business ecosystem that is slowly evolving. There's a big reset button being pressed, and we'll see a lot of change and adjustment coming with it. So, here's some **general comms tips** as well as **channel specific considerations** from us.



# COVID-19 - OUR TOP 7 COMMUNICATIONS TIPS

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1. **Listen and be mindful...** of what else is going on in the world
2. **Be smart...** reassure and support your team and existing customer base
3. **Stay present...** keep listening and maintain your profile
4. **Spend...** your marketing budget on the right things
5. **Learn...** what's working in the current climate and what isn't
6. **Be authentic...** people will know when you're not
7. **Be kind...** to others and yourself



**THINGS TO THINK  
ABOUT AND FOCUS ON...**

It goes without saying that you should be including **communications as part of your crisis and issues handling** (if you haven't already). Hope for the best but plan for the worst they say... we know times are going to be tough in some shape or form so make sure you **factor in who you'll need to communicate with, what you'll need to say, how you're going to say it, when to say it and who needs to be involved**. Now is very much the time for scenario planning and putting things in place should you need to react quickly. Alongside this, many businesses will also be looking at the best ways to support customers as well as safeguarding their teams and business. Communications is going to play a big part in how this is done – so if you're looking at how to manage your comms at this time, thinking about **what to prioritise and what to switch off potentially**, here's a few things to consider.

# 1. *Direct contact / Partnerships*

Picking up the phone and having an open discussion with existing clients and partners is key to nurturing and maintaining relationships, offering invaluable support. **Listening is probably the biggest thing we can all do right now**, and it will help you rethink your offering, see how you can develop your business to provide relevant and potentially even better products or support. Stay in contact with your customers and listen to what they need (or pre-empt it by reading between the lines); find out what's worrying them and demonstrate empathy and problem-solving skills at this time. Be genuine. This also rings true for your team – they will be feeling similarly about the whole situation. We need to pull together more than ever at this time and working closely with your team, partners, networks and contacts will allow you to be able to see how you can collaborate to weather the storm. What can you do together that will help and is there anything you can do for the wider community?

## *2. Social listening*

This is a biggie, so it deserves its' own point. Through social listening tools, we can garner a lot of 'real-time' insights and information that can help shape key business decisions – you can **monitor keywords, conversations** around sectors or brands from across a wide range of online platforms which will allow you to **mitigate risk, influence R&D** and **respond authentically** and genuinely.

### *3. Social*

Use social as an **extension of your everyday 'face to face' communications**, growing your network and continuing conversations online and sharing useful information. Good things can come from the most random conversations and connections. But don't just jump on the bandwagon - **have meaningful conversations** and you'll maintain profile and presence for the right reasons. More and more people will be working from home and keeping up to date via social, especially around breaking news, so **be present in this space and engage authentically**. You should consider some paid activity too to bolster the useful content you create as many social platforms restrict how much connections/contacts can see.

### *4. Content*

Is important no matter what channel you're using to **get your messages out there**. Create and share useful blogs, tips, opinions, social posts and one-pagers. Don't forget to use imagery and video where possible to help illustrate your points/key messages even more effectively, **always being sensitive to the current situation**. Share key information, keep customers and the wider (business) community in the know. Is it really business as usual for you? If so, great – make sure people know that and if not be clear on what is achievable (with customers and your team). **Share with your team too** – being upfront and honest is the best policy.

## *5. Email / Whatsapp*

These are **quick and effective ways of keeping in touch** with your team and customers. Personal emails for example with targeted helpful information, inspiration and relevant news or resources will help your people think differently and you stay front of mind alongside direct contact. Consider WhatsApp groups for quick messages and communications for customers, partners and the team – it's a great way to stay in touch.

## *6. Webinars / Hangouts / Zoom calls*

In light of social distancing measures that are likely to get more stringent as time goes on, it's worth considering video meet ups/webinars to host panel discussions, training sessions, share useful advice or to collaborate if you haven't already. This will also be **essential for teams with increased home working** and **keeping in contact** with clients/nurturing relationships.

Now is not the time to get camera shy – so practice with friends or family if need be!

# 7. PPC

If you are managing a PPC account in-house or even via your agency, you need **to review the messages and keywords you are targeting** (clearly with more and more people working from home and being online pretty much constantly and trying to multitask). PPC advertising is going to need to work even harder, especially if you are dependent on this for the majority of your businesses leads / sales. There's nothing worse than someone searching for something, viewing your advert and being completely averse to your brand purely due to inappropriate message being run.

# 8. SEO

You may have heard this repeatedly, but **SEO is a long game**. This is the time to hold fast and **tackle** all of those potentially **impactful SEO tasks you've had on the back burner**. So, for example, this could now be:

- Run a mini audit of all your content on the site and start an inventory of all your content assets, no time like the present
- Do you have the time to update your site with fresh content?
- Can you look to optimise content with new call to actions and keywords?
- Start adding internal links to existing copy that point to new products or services that will be helpful at this time
- Look at what content is working well that could be repurposed for other channels
- Now that you may have a bit of time and space to dig deeper, you can look at targeting position zero, video carousels, paragraph snippets etc.
- Seek out the unnatural links to your website. Numerous case studies show improvements to a website's rankings after the disavow file has been submitted removing a raft of unnatural links. Go hunt...

### *9. Video*

Start recording videos - **these can help, target long-tail keywords**, trigger featured snippets and appear in relevant YouTube searches. If you also transcribe the video, this copy could sit alongside videos in blog posts, and by using screenshots of the video you could combine this with a social media plan to drop the snippets with images alongside and start using social channels to drive traffic to both the video and your site.

## *10. Online Reviews*

The web is potentially littered with online reviews about your product or services. You don't have to trawl the web for every single review, but **at the very least answer and respond** to the **latest reviews.**

## *11. Google My Business Profile*

Make sure this **reflects what's happening with your business now** that we are all working in very different circumstances. Have your **operating hours** been updated to reflect the changes, are **contact numbers** relevant in terms of re-directed numbers as you will want to be contactable regardless of where you are working from.

## *12. Analytics*

Get to know your customers a bit more and **delve deeper into your analytics**. Can you start looking further into what customers are doing on your site and what is it showing you about your content? Are the pages on the site working in terms of attracting leads or sales, if not why not? If you want to start to **review and understand how people engage with your site**, then things like HotJar will allow you to view exactly what a customer is doing on your site by recording their actions and allowing you to watch this back. This has allowed us to overhaul website layouts purely based on the actions that users take or don't take on a website. There's a free version which gives you a lot of information to work with.

*Stay Safe*

We'll all get through this together...