polymorphic marketing

SOCIAL

DISTANCE

MARKETING

Countries around the world have been implementing measures to slow the spread of the Coronavirus, from national quarantines to business closures.

Predictions for the future seem to change every day, unfortunately Coronavirus will not magically disappear over night and even if it did the ripple effects of what's happened so far will endure for months. It's a reality we have to deal with.

However don't panic, things may be a little different at the moment, but the old rules of marketing still apply. It's important not to stop communicating with your customers. Cutting your marketing budget may lead to temporary profitability gains, however when the crisis is behind us the challenges of a possible recession will be compounded by reduced brand awareness.

As the COVID-19 lockdowns begin to ease and companies start to reopen their doors we consider practical steps marketeers could take to adapt their marketing to the current social distancing situation.

In this ebook we will cover the following topics:

- *Your communication strategy*

- *Your marketing plan*

- *How to execute a marketing content audit*

- *Content atomization*

- *Social distancing and events*

- *Tips for maximising virtual event engagement*

- *Supporting your sales teams*

Review your current communication strategy

Ensure you have a mindful communication strategy. It's still not the time for aggressive email marketing, but it is the time to connect more thoughtfully with your customers.

You may want to limit your outbound communications for critical and useful messaging. Consider how you can help your customers with communications about product inventory, delivery times, or information about a cancelled event.

Focus your inbound marketing efforts on educational messaging about how your products and services can help and benefit people.

If you are working for a global company it's important to remember that different countries are in different phases of the pandemic, so consider a more agile, localised approach to communication.

Review your marketing plan

Review what is logistically feasible for you and your team to achieve over the next 6 to 12 months. As we all know the vast majority of marketing projects have many complex building blocks to them.

Whilst it may be possible to forge ahead with most of your plans, try to be realistic about the constraints of social distancing in the workplace and consider the extra time, budget and resource that potentially might be needed to get things done. Will it take the same amount of time to perform a video shoot or produce the research for an application note?

Conduct an audit of your marketing content

Social distancing will likely impact how easy it is to produce the data, photography and other assets needed for new marketing collateral, such as application notes and research pieces. So now is a great time to review your existing content and determine how it can work harder for you.

Many science companies already have some really great research and application data, however, that data is often not totally utilised across a fully fleshed out marketing campaign. Maybe you have an application note that has been launched and never revisited. Conducting an audit of your marketing content will help you uncover these hidden gems, and plug any holes in your marketing plan with some renewed collateral. Performing a content audit is also good practice, and will highlight just exactly how much content you have.

5 steps to audit your marketing content

1 – Define the goal of the audit

There are a number of reasons why you may want to conduct an audit of your content. You may want to evaluate your content for inconsistent messaging or simply determine which pieces are now redundant.
In this instance you will want to look at under performing pieces and compare them with pieces that have performed well.

2 – Identify which content to include

Not all organisations have an inventory of all of their content assets. If you don't have one now is a good time to pull one together. It will give you the opportunity to fully realise just how much content you actually have.

Ensure you consider all of your content, audits have a tendency to focus on your online presence only as it's easy to get analytics data for that, however do you have printed pieces that engage well with your customers?

3 – Define your inventory data

Before compiling your list of content pieces you need to define which data sets to include in your content inventory.

Some common ones to consider include: title/headline, content summary, focus product(s), audience and message. If you have any analytics data you will also want to include it, however, you will need to consider the time frame in which the data was taken.

4 – Establish a hierarchy of content value

Develop a system for grading your content pieces. This can be challenging to do. Typically you will want to consider your content's engagement metrics, analytics, downloads and social media likes and shares. You may also review your content's quality, you can do this be considering word count, topic relevance, and uniqueness. Finally you can review your contents SEO value, do you use the correct keywords in the content piece, headline and subheading?

Ultimately it's up to you how you want to grade your content.

5 – Audit your content

Start auditing your content, but, don't just work in a silo, ask sales, technical support and customer service for their valuable input. You may want to consider reviewing your reprint rates and trade show data to see which printed pieces have had traction. Finally, if appropriate, reach out to customers and ask for their feedback.

Once you have audited your content it's time to organise and decide what actions to take next with each piece:

- *Keep*
- *Delete*
- *Revise & update*
- *Republish*
- *Atomize*

Content atomization

You will want to keep content that is working well and delete content that isn't performing. However before you pull the trigger and delete a piece consider why it didn't perform well. Does it need revising, was it badly launched, could it be republished, or could any data in a piece be presented differently?

Content atomization can help make a piece of marketing collateral work even harder for you, but isn't atomization just repurposing?

Repurposing content typically takes the same piece of collateral and reformats it for use in different channels without significant change. Reformatting content does not consider a marketing funnel approach and how the content sits in a logical journey that converts browsing eyes into customers. Atomizing content is when you break a key piece of collateral down into stand alone pieces that can fill gaps in your marketing funnel. An example may be taking the chapters of a white paper and turning them into a series of blog posts.

Atomization takes a core message, behind a piece and allows you to spread that message across multiple platforms and in multiple ways, that will allow you to speak to different types of customer personas who may engage with different forms of content.

At a time of social distancing and when budgets are tight a content atomization strategy is resource efficient. It allows for your content to have a greater reach, whilst being less effort than trying to create brand new content, saving you time, money and resource.

Review you events calendar

You have likely reviewed your events calendar, and already had to cancel a number of trade shows and events.

The situation with regards to big in-person events will remain unclear for at least the next 12 to 18 months.

Even if in-person events are able to return in the not to distant future they will likely have to adhere to social distancing practices, which may make them more costly to produce and less effective for both exhibitor and attendee. For example trade shows may need to limit the number of people able to attend, there may need to be more space between booths and one way aisle systems. Considerations on travel restrictions, the availability of accommodation and the complexities of logistics for exhibition equipment would also need to be made.

Many meetings and events have already been replaced with online virtual events. A virtual meeting could never really replace all of the social networking that happens at a big event, especially around the bar in the evening! However at this point in time they can be key in helping keep people connected, encourage customers to learn about new products, and help people share research and new ideas.
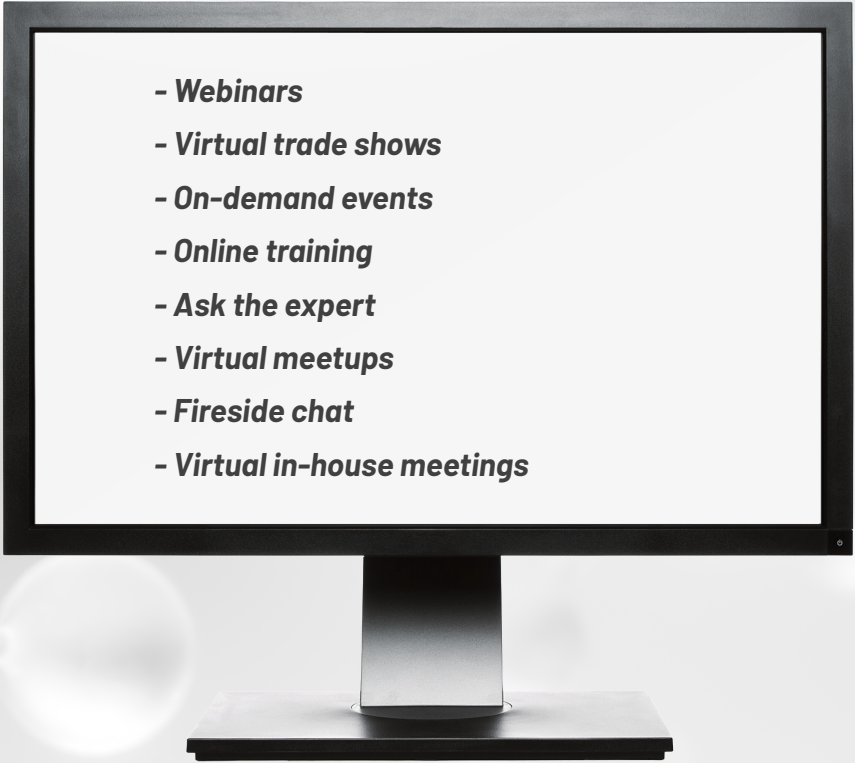
There are also plenty of advantages for virtual events. They have lower cost overheads, you can also reach a wider audience with travel costs and location not being prohibitory to potential attendees and they have far less of an environmental impact. They allow you to track who is attending and engaging with materials.

Virtual events will, or indeed have, become part of the marketing mix, but there will always be a place for face to face meetings and personal contact.

There are different types of virtual events from a more intimate virtual meetup to a large virtual trade show. Some events will be completely live and others could offer a mixture of live content and on-demand content. Consider your buyer personas, what type of virtual event would they find appealing?

The Coronavirus crisis will be preventing a lot of businesses from hosting their own company get-togethers, sales meetings and kick off events. Companies can move these internal meetings online. They just need to ensure that they are engaging and don't become a monotonous PowerPoint festival. It's still important to mix up content and utilise lots of interactive tools and activities.

Types of virtual events

- Webinars

- Virtual trade shows

- On-demand events

- Online training

- Ask the expert

- Virtual meetups

- Fireside chat

- Virtual in-house meetings

Virtual events like in-person events, require good planning and marketing.

Attendance will be minimal without targeted and effective promotion.

5 tips for maximising virtual event engagement

1 - Content is king

As with all marketing activities content is king. Don't fall into the trap of just reusing what you have always had. Determine what content would be needed for live presentations, on-demand use and for lead follow up.

What may work well for in-person meetings may not work so well over the internet. For example complicated animations on a PowerPoint may lag when presented live online, especially when people have different internet speeds.

2 - Practice, practice, practice

If you are presenting live keep content simple, bold and to the point. Make your event memorable for the right reasons, so ensure the right technology is in place, with good sound, video, lighting and a great internet connection. Practice the delivery and timing of the content, and then practice again! Be prepared for questions you may be asked at the end of the presentation.

3 - On-demand, higher production value

If you're producing on-demand content then you can be more playful with your animations and graphics and offer a higher production value. On-demand content needs to be engaging, short and punchy to keep the attention of the viewer.
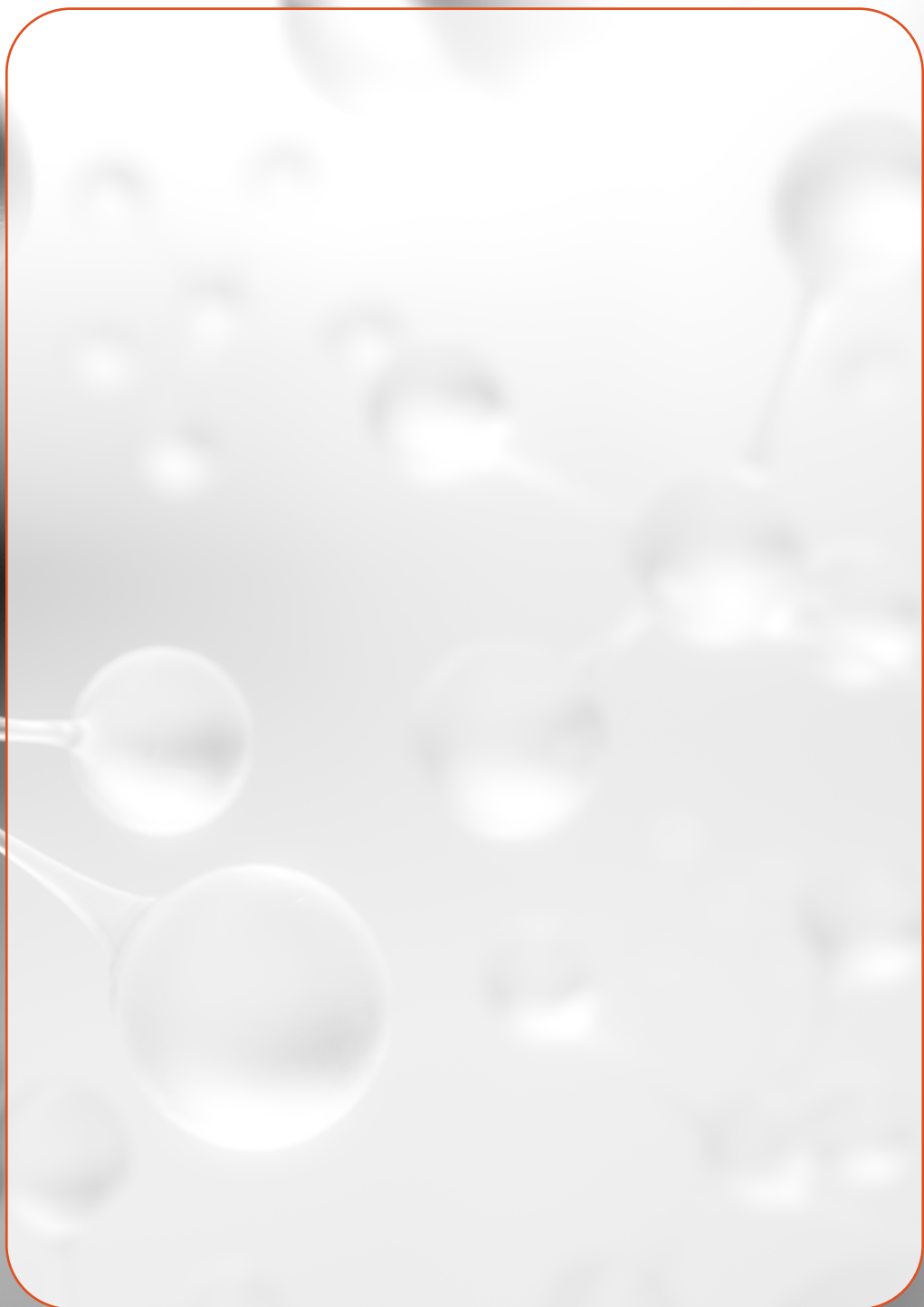
4 - Keep you attendees engaged

Think about ways to keep your attendees engaged. There are activities you could run such as; ice-breakers, question and answer sessions, ask the expert panels, guest speakers, live product demonstrations, live polling and feedback surveys.

Just because the event has been brought online doesn't mean you should forego any entertainment, especially if it is a day long event. Consider hosting competitions and offering prizes that can be sent in the post following the event. You may want to offer an online musical performance over lunch time, or an online yoga session at the start or end of the day.

5 - Go hybrid

Make virtual events more hybrid by sending attendees a printed exhibition pack in the post before the event. Whilst this may add more overall cost, it will act as a reminder for the event, give your attendees something physical to engage with and make your event more special.

5 tips for supporting sales

Outside sales reps are trying new tools and systems to help them navigate the social distancing era and maintain their targets. Face to face meetings have not only been replaced with an increase in phone calls, but the use of video calls has rapidly increased.

1 – Content and presentation

Video calls enable sales people to have a more engaging experience with their prospects and allows for the sharing of more information than just a conversation. Presentations, photos, videos, calculations and application notes can quickly be shared on a video call.

It's important that sales people have the right tools and training to be able to do their jobs, remember not everyone is tech-savvy, and not everyone will reach out for help.

Talk to your sales reps to find out if your marketing content is supporting them in this new environment. Are there new ways to present and repurpose your content to work more effectively across video calls?

2 – Help sales solve customer problems more quickly

Ensuring rapid access to the correct supporting collateral is essential. Make sure your collateral databases and literature libraries are up to date, easy to navigate and searchable. Review your file naming conventions, check that they are clear and meaningful to both sales reps and customers.
Make sure your sales people know how gain access to collateral and are trained on how best to maximise the use of different pieces.

3 – Integrated thinking

Working as a cross-functional team ensures sales and customer services have access to up to date stock levels and a clear line of site to potential future logistical challenges.

Offering a demo or a sample is usually a key part of the scientific product sales process, with an external sales rep typically being part of product demonstration. Review your demo equipment and sample arrangements. You may need to increase the demo stock of products, and implement a strict decontamination procedure for returned demo equipment.

4 – Get social

With people working from their home offices there has been a noticeable increase in outside sales reps engaging with social media. This is great, however, try to give your sales team content to engage with, post, share and like. Providing on point content will safeguard your brand and ensure you stay on message by preventing "home made" flyers from entering circulation.

5 – Keep your sales teams motivated

Be sure to celebrate and share successes across the complete team. Sales people are usually social creatures, so consider hosting regular virtual sales huddles where you can share ideas and best practices.

External marketing agencies can assist you in various ways:

- *Marketing expertise and resource*
- *Creative ideas and an external perspective*
- *Increased marketing productivity*

In times of uncertainty one of the biggest benefits a marketing agency can offer you is flexible, agile marketing support.

Utilising an external marketing agency allows you to scale your marketing activities up based on your business requirements. They can help add extra resource to boost elements of your existing strategy, alleviate pressure from your busy in-house marketing team or offer existing staff cover.

Hiring a marketing agency will provide you with new dynamics that should kick start new ideas and inspiration, providing fresh opportunities for your business.

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