

Part 4 – Keeping Current Clients Happy and Sales Flowing

If you're going from being a brick and mortar retail store, customers could physically browse, read product labels, ask questions immediately, and test your products before buying, so you're facing a massive change in the e-commerce world and have a few things to think about and changes to implement to get sales back up and running – especially if you did not offer online selling prior.



Regardless of whether you're a brick and mortar store selling gift products, or a different business offering other kinds of products and/or services, you'll need to reassess, analyse, recreate, update, and possibly create from scratch, things like:

1. Your employee and customer policies

a) *What's your role in helping your employees and customers during times of crisis – is it clear?*

If not, ensure you define it, and shout it from the rooftops. If you're perceived to be a caring, employee- and customer-focused business, you have a greater chance of not only surviving, but thriving, during this time;

b) *Show employees you care and understand*

Show them you care and understand by making adjustments that make their lives a little easier in some way, such as loosening deadlines, or allowing variable work hours.

The most important thing is to stay connected. Communication, especially that which is a genuine check-in call, not a "hurry up and get the work done, I don't care that your kids won't leave you alone" call, will ensure your employees not only *know* but actually *feel* valued and will get a sense of security that you are doing your absolute best to keep them employed during this time;

c) *Customers are, generally, employees too*

Customers may not be able to continue working and therefore lose their main source of income. Or, like your employees, are simply trying to cope with daily life and need their needs met quickly, efficiently, and from a source they view as safe, trustworthy, consistent, and deserving of their money;

d) Consider offering loyal customers an incentive

Such as a discount, additional time added onto existing payment arrangements, or making the returns/exchanges process easier. Additionally, a lot of existing e-commerce companies are quickly running out of stock, so think about prioritising inventory into the areas which your competitors are failing to meet the needs of.

2. Your brand/company purpose and values**a) Establish new or solidify existing communication principles**

This isn't just setting it up and walking away; lead your employees by example – you can't expect employees to follow guidelines without governance or guidance.

3. Your content – what message you're sending, relevance, and impact**a) Everything you publish will be seen by potential customers**

Every advertising, selling, or communication channel, its content, and the message it's sending to its audience matters. It must be consistent, reassuring, confidence and trust building;

b) Relevance

Currently, relevance means showing you take employee and customer health and safety seriously. Re-work your message to emphasise your commitment to employee and customer health and safety.

4. Your products/existing inventory – including pricing and shipping costs**a) Concentrate first on stock/inventory that can be:**

- Advertised quickly and easily through your existing channels;
- Can be moved quickly from your offline locations;
- Is relatively “easy” to sell – e.g. don't try and push your brand-new idea – instead, push your well-known, customer “must have” products.
First, focus on staying afloat; second, focus on re-building profit;

b) Shipping and suppliers.

Shipping especially is in a difficult position now, so you need to look at your current suppliers and delivery providers and research alternatives, if necessary. You may have plenty of stock now, but what if you sell it all tomorrow? Can you get more, fast, from your current supplier? If they're overseas, chances are there'll be a long delay, which is the period in which your customers will find a new source and you won't be able to get rid of the stock when it arrives.

So, consider local alternatives, not just to help you keep your customers, but to support other New Zealand businesses who are also doing it tough.

5. Digital Content and Operations

Digital content must be rapidly updated to ensure you remain current, relevant, and your product(s) and/or services remain available. Consider things like:

a) *Include more detail*

Customers can read the product information on the jar on the shelf, but can they do this virtually? Include pictures of the nutritional/usage/ingredient/etc label, consider 360° images so the customer can virtually “handle” the product, etc;

b) *Testers*

How will you cater to this want, now? Will you offer a refundable trial period? Or, will you provide smaller, cheaper products for this purpose?

6. Partnerships

Every business is struggling, whether they show it, or not. With international travel running at a snail’s pace, consider local businesses for your supply needs, whether for things like office stationery, or for materials you need for your product(s)/services, and reach out to them with a partnership proposal. For example, bulk-buy discounts, referral deals, and so on. them with a partnership proposal.

How can I help you, the business owner, be the best leader and version of yourself?



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