



HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

The things you need to know about keeping your customers engaged during a global pandemic

REAL TALK ENTERPRISE



Let's do this!

ready or not.

Every business experienced unique challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the changes we have to make in our personal lives, we also have to reevaluate our businesses to make sure we can sustain through an international crisis. That certainly wasn't (and still isn't) an easy task.

This pandemic has created uncertainty for so many people - consumers and business alike. Entrepreneurs and small business owners have proven to be some of the most vulnerable business groups across the country, so it's important to stay connected to your customers during this time.

Best practices for showing up consistently:

- Have a crisis content strategy
- Create a content calendar
- Tell a genuine and appropriate message



One of the most common questions we get asked is, how does a business connect with customers during a crisis? We encourage you to create a crisis communication plan, update your website, engage with your email list, utilize social media, and respond to customers quickly.



One way to create a crisis content strategy is by following the [HEART framework of crisis communication](#). The HEART framework was designed by two business professors at Texas Tech University, who have nearly 70 years of combined experience in business and education.

The HEART frameworks suggests that your crisis communication content should do the following:

- H - Humanize your company
- E - Educate about change
- A - Assure stability
- R - Revolutionize offerings
- T - Tackle the future

Humanize your company -

Deliver content with empathy and show your customers that their health and safety are your top priorities.

Educate about change -

Tell your customers about the changes you have made in your business in order to build confidence in your ability to manage through this crisis.

Assure stability -

Let your customers know that as we all navigate through this pandemic, the quality of your products or services will not change.

Revolutionize offerings -

Share the new products or services that your business offers as you work to adapt to COVID-19.

Tackle the future -

Announce your timeline for reviewing your business operations. You want to be proactive and disclose when your customers can expect updates about your business operations.

Update your website.

You don't want to assume that your customers automatically know about the changes you made to your business. They won't know that contactless delivery is available, or that all your employees are required to wear masks at work unless you announce it. Dedicate a section of your website to share those updates.

What updates need to go on my website?

In order to find out what you need to share, answer the following three questions:

- How has COVID-19 impacted your business?
- How did your business adapt to those changes?
- What have you done or contributed to stop the spread of COVID-19?

If you had to make any changes to your business that could impact your customers, you should mention that on your website.

For example, retailers are experiencing longer than normal delivery times and they mention that on their website for shoppers to see. By doing this, you show your customers that you are aware of the things that will impact their shopping experience.



Engage your email list.

Your email list is a very valuable asset to you as a business owner. Sending emails to your customers during this pandemic is a great way to stay connected with them. Here are three email content ideas that you can send to your customers.

Let customers know how you are supporting them.

Show your customers what steps your business is taking to support them. This could include things like discounted services, free shipping on all orders, or sharing free resources that can help them during this challenging time.

Think about your customers and their immediate needs during this crisis? How can you meet those needs for them?

A private travel and lifestyle concierge company sent their clients a free digital guide that included a list of easy dinner recipes, online learning tools for parents and their children, and local grocery store hours of operation. It was a PDF that took less than 48 hours to curate.

Even though this company makes money by booking travel and selling event tickets, they took the opportunity to create something valuable that their customers needed.

This company realized that talking about travel is a sensitive topic right now, so they used the opportunity to pivot and give their customers something essential instead.

What do your customers need right now, and how can you support them with it?

ENGAGE YOUR EMAIL LIST (CONT.)

Notify them of any operational changes.

Even though you already updated your website with any COVID-19 updates, sending an email to your subscribers is another way to reiterate those updates.

Talk about how your business is adapting to the pandemic and tell your customers what they can expect from you in the coming weeks (or months in some cases).

As you make changes to your business or make preparations for re-opening, email those updates to your subscribers also.

If you were hosting any events in the coming months, let customers know how to attend the event virtually or share information about cancelling or rescheduling the event.

Have you done good work in your community? Share that too.

Many companies are doing what they can to help families that have been impacted by COVID-19. Take this opportunity to let your customers know what you have done to support your community.

Share your plans to give back, donate supplies or proceeds to local charities, or help your community.

This shows that you are aware of the impact that COVID-19 has on your community and you are doing your part in supporting families and other businesses.

Additional email marketing ideas to connect with your customers:

- Free resources for homeschool learning
- Inspirational messages of hope
- Thank you messages to essential workers

Get in front of customers on social media.

Living through an international health crisis and economic crisis at the same time creates several unknowns for businesses. One thing that we do know is that the needs of our customers have changed drastically.

The social media content that you originally planned for this season may not work for your customers anymore. Businesses around the world had to pivot in order to meet new customer demands. Your social media content should change too.

Social media is a great way to stay connected with your customers because it offers real-time interaction with customers globally. When you think about the content on your website, it's very one-sided. Meaning, you publish content for visitors to read. Social media, on the other hand, can act as an exchange between businesses and customers.



GET IN FRONT OF CUSTOMERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (CONT.)

You can learn a lot from your customers on social media. Pay attention to their status updates and the articles they share. That will give you an idea of what your customers are experiencing right now. After you determine which social media channels are right for your business, you can begin to craft engaging content for your customers (and for your potential customers).

Here are some quick ways that you can win at social media during a crisis:

- Update your contact info and hours of operation to reflect changes in your business.
- Be consistent in your social media content strategy.
- Find a balance between positivity and empathy.
- Show genuine concern for the wellbeing of your customers.

Many businesses have pivoted to promote helpful resources and share valuable solutions more than promoting their products and services right now.

If you can add value to your customers during this pandemic, they will remember that and continue to purchase from you in the future.

Look for old content that can be revised and repurposed. This can be in the form of social media statuses, videos, blog posts, or email newsletters.

Reiterate your operational updates and share what you're doing to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Please note: If you share articles from other sources, make sure it's from a trusted source with accurate information.

Respond to questions quickly.

Make it easy for customers to contact you when they have questions. They should be able to find the contact form on your website very quickly.

In addition, customers may reach out to you via social media in hopes of receiving a faster response. Remember to check your direct messages along with your business email and reply with a sense of urgency.

When customers reach out and ask you questions, you want to respond as quickly as possible. Show your customers that you are working urgently to address their concerns.

This helps build trust with your customers and it shows that you are confident in your ability to manage during a crisis.

Customer questions and customer feedback also give you valuable insight into their needs during this pandemic. The questions they ask can give you ideas for ways to pivot your business and continue adapting to the changing times.

For example, a baker temporarily closed her baking business since people were not able to assemble for large gatherings like birthday parties, weddings, graduations, and baby showers. One customer emailed the baker and asked if he could pick up some cookies to decorate with his family that weekend.

This gave the baker an idea to pivot her business and sell cookie decorating kits. Each kit included one dozen cookies, printed instructions, decorating tools, and access to a private video tutorial on YouTube. She also added contactless pickup at her bakery.

Final thoughts.

Staying connected to your customers is important and you can achieve that by following the guide we provided you. Update your website with all your business changes and updates. This lets customers know that you are proactive in your response to COVID-19. Engage with your email list to reinforce what you're doing to keep them safe and stop the spread of the virus.

Use social media to interact with customers and share updates daily. Then, act with urgency to respond to customer inquiries and questions.

Things to avoid:

It's not too soon to start thinking about how your business will function post COVID-19. It is important, however, to remember the sensitivity of the current times and keep that at the forefront of your content strategy.

Go back through any previously scheduled email newsletter and remove those that no longer fit the current social climate.

Look at your upcoming paid ads to make sure they still fit your crisis content strategy.

Review your current sales funnel and any other workflows you have saved in your email marketing tools. You may need to add a few more filler emails before your final email with the big sales pitch.

Refrain from insensitive advertising. Don't use "COVID-19" or "quarantine" as a promo code. Instead, use your business name or the service you offer. For example, use promo code "CHEESE10" for 10% off a pizza delivery.

Next steps:

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You don't have to figure this
all out on your own.

let us help you!

Here at Real Talk Enterprise, we offer services
that can help you with content creation,
website updates, email marketing, and social
media management right now.

Our goal is to partner with you to create the
right message for your customers and position
you as a trusted leader to help them get
through COVID-19.

Are you ready to work together?

Get in touch with us using our [contact form](#).
We will be in touch within 24 hours.

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