



Create, Communicate, and Tell Your Story

As you work through the Financial and Safety components of restarting your business, you are taking the important steps to move forward. And as you accomplish those steps, remember that Communication is a critical factor in your recovery plan. Even before reopening, you will want to convey that your business is ready to welcome guests once again, and your environment is a safe and healthy place for your staff, vendors and clients/customers. As a business leader, your strength and confidence will reassure your constituents that you are doing everything you can to keep them safe. It's not enough to simply open the doors and wait for people to come in – your effective communication plan will be the key to regenerating traffic and sales for your business.

While everything has changed, some business owners will try to attain a “new normal” that most closely resembles a pre-COVID experience. For others, this crisis presents a unique opportunity to reevaluate your goals, even viewing your business as a start-up once again. In fact, you may decide to take an entirely different direction.

We have provided a series of questions below for you to review and respond. Your responses will help you gain clarity, and lead you to developing forward-thinking strategies and messaging to address health and safety, and in the longer term, the reinvigoration and revitalization of your brand story.

PRE-OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Who are my target markets? Has my audience changed in light of the pandemic?
2. What are the needs of our clients/customers now and how can we best fulfill them?
3. Is there a way to add value to my existing products or services?
4. Should I consider new or different product lines or add additional or related services?
5. Should I offer a re-opening discount or a special offer to entice customers to return?
6. Is there a new customer segment that I can target with either my existing or new product lines or services?
7. Is it time for a new branding program?
8. Can I begin or take better advantage of social media and/or ecommerce in this new environment?
9. What resources do I need to accomplish these goals?

SAFETY QUESTIONS: INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. What can I do to ensure that my staff feels safe in their workplace?
2. How will I implement safety training procedures in a positive, professional manner?
3. How will I let my staff know it is safe to return?
4. What messages will I provide to my staff to convey to customers about our business' safety and sanitation procedures?

SAFETY QUESTIONS: EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. How will I let my clients/customers know that our business is safe, giving them the confidence to return?
2. What tools will I need? Email blasts, posters in store, floor stickers for social distancing, signage, newsletters for example
3. What does the customer experience look like now in my place of business? Social distancing? Separating seats? Outside service?
4. How can I enhance that experience to attract new and existing customers?

5. What tactics can I implement to share this experience with my customers? Photos, videos, etc.

MARKETING QUESTIONS

1. Who are my target markets right now?
2. Is my marketing plan updated to address the changes in the marketplace and to include our health and safety communications? Have I considered updating my marketing plan for the short and the long term?
3. Who are my main competitors? What can I do to differentiate my business?
4. What type of marketing/communications plan works best for my business? 4-wall? RACE?
5. What changes will I have to make on my website, email marketing, and/or collateral materials?
6. Will I increase/change my social media plan? Will I add other social media tools? Instagram, LinkedIn for example

PUBLIC RELATIONS QUESTIONS

1. Think about your business and client relationships. How can I build upon existing relationships and potentially create new relationships?
2. Who are my key partners?
3. Who are my media partners?
4. How is my business perceived in the community?
5. How am I involved in the community? Am I giving back? Creating relationships with other organizations?
6. Do I have a public relations plan that meets my business' current climate and includes our new positioning?
7. Do I have a crisis communications plan in case the worst should happen?