

The logo for Blabbermouth, featuring the word "Blabbermouth" in a white, sans-serif font. The letter "o" in "mouth" is replaced by a red speech bubble icon with a white outline. The background of the top left corner is a colorful, abstract geometric pattern of overlapping squares and triangles in shades of red, orange, purple, and teal.

Blabbermouth

A woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a white tank top and a brown button-down shirt, is smiling and looking at a laptop. She is sitting in what appears to be a modern office or co-working space with blurred desks and chairs in the background. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

EVOLVING YOUR SALES STRATEGY

in the midst of Covid -19

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO KEEP BUSINESSES RELEVANT IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES?

2020 saw business up and down the country doing their utmost to source laptops and headsets; striving to enable staff to work from home, all while determining how to stay operational and minimise any long-term effect. While we all hope that this dies down sooner rather than later, we can all agree that it would be unwise for a business to plan around hope, and some businesses may instinctively go into 'cut-mode' and shut down any non-essential spending to maximise available resources.

Instead, leaders should be taking stock of the new landscape, as we don't know how long the situation will last, and exploring how best to adapt marketing strategies, operations and the products and services offered, to weather this storm and come out the other end, still swimming.

So, what are businesses to do? What can be done to keep businesses relevant in this time of uncertainty? By leveraging virtual platforms that are already available, shortening sales cycles and rethinking operational workflows, businesses can take this challenge and turn it into an opportunity to excel and stand out from the crowd.

MARKETING STRATEGY

Now that the rush to get staff equipped and connected has started to die-down and continuity plans have been executed, plans now need to be put in place for the economic 'bounce-back'. After all, some decision-makers may now find themselves with more free time compared to normal, and will be using that time to research the products and services that were already on the 'shopping list' before coronavirus, or possibly finding new products that will enable them to return fitter, faster and more agile than before.

SALES AUTOMATION

Sales automation is nothing new, but time pressures are higher than ever before and strong automation can almost act as an extra salesperson. With all the extra meetings to attend and catch-up emails to write, some are finding that they have less time available in the working day to devote to nurturing prospects. It's worth bearing in mind too, that many businesses will have routed numbers to mobiles or voicemail boxes, which means that digital communication will become a key method of communication. Also, some workforces will get smaller, so remaining workers will have to take on more work as a consequence too. Therefore, automating as much of your employees' workflows as possible, by leveraging a marketing platform like HubSpot, will help to free-up time for other projects and dealing with the 'day-to-day', while still serving your prospects. This ensures that any effects on planned pipelines are mitigated as much as possible by keeping prospects engaged and progressing through your customer journey.

EDUCATION

Now is the time to be thinking about what those potential prospects need to know to help them along your customer journey and getting that information in front of them. Not only that, but this is an opportunity to stand out from the competition in your thought leadership and to say something that your competitors are not. While inboxes are being bombarded with remote working advice blogs and special offers, what can you say that's different? In the coming months, staff will become accustomed to remote working, and when we all return to the office again, staff will want to take what they've learnt and apply that back to their office routine. So, integrating any new technologies, connectivity or software used currently back into office operations will be critical.

ONLINE SUPPORT

Bear in mind that customer service and support has always been a major factor in considered purchases, too. Technologies like screen sharing and remote access aren't exactly 'bleeding edge', but any business that offers support or training needs to consider how their customers are going to be cared for, now that onsite visits are highly unlikely. Webinars, online FAQs and 'How-to' videos are going to get a lot more popular very soon.

PERSONALISATION

We all like to be valued as people, rather than statistics or metrics, which is why a personally addressed email or a website that says “Welcome back Bob!” is going to be far more welcoming to Bob, than not being acknowledged at all. And, if Bob is choosing which business he is going to buy from, that friendly greeting could be the deciding factor between Bob being a prospect lost or won. Personalisation helps businesses give the impression that they are going the extra mile and considering the prospect personally. The right tools will make your brand more memorable, and given how people will be wanting to foster new relationships once we’re all back in the office, personalising your correspondence will help your business stand out from the rest.

ORGANISATION AND COMMUNICATION

Acclimatising to the physical move from office to remote working is a challenge in itself, let alone continuing to execute any and all tasks and projects to the same high standard. But, if businesses can overcome those hurdles and go a step further; re-imagining how the business operates and evolving its thinking to leapfrog the competition, businesses have an opportunity to excel through strong leadership, awareness and planning.

LEADERSHIP

In these times of uncertainty, people are looking for true leadership from individuals and businesses, and this is a key opportunity for Channel leaders to shine. While all other businesses are asking customers to be patient or understand things might take longer, those bullish leaders that can counter those half-apologies with confidence in their services going on as normal will truly stand out. Instead of acknowledging the effect COVID-19 has had and asking customers to ‘bear with you in these unprecedented times’, showing your customers and prospects that your operation is unaffected and still going strong – via regular blogs, social, PR, etc. – proves the company’s ability to stay composed and think strategically, which could help influence a prospect’s decision in your favour.

SALES ENABLEMENT

For the foreseeable future, businesses need to focus on identifying the products that are most suited to selling remotely, like low CapEx solutions and products that are suited to remote teams. Virtual sales teams need to consider the entire sales journey and provide sellers with solutions that help to achieve that first sale remotely. Not only that but having polished, slick assets (online presentations, FAQs, infographics, etc.) will help lift your corporate image compared to your competitors, while they are rushing to cobble ‘something’ together. It’s also worth considering whether your business could leverage webinar platforms for meetings and training, Adobe Echosign for invoicing, Messaging platforms for ongoing project work, etc. that can all expedite the sales process and help teams keep their momentum and build a pipeline for future big-ticket deals.

REMOTE SECURITY

Very few staff have an idea of the lengths that businesses go to, especially large corporations, to protect themselves and staff from online vulnerabilities and cyber criminals. Therefore, Channel businesses need to start asking their customers how they can better serve staff and help them strengthen their home security and ensure that all cyber security measures are accurately mirrored by staff when working from home.

EVENTS PLANNING

At some point in the future, once the coronavirus has blown over, businesses will ‘bounce back’. When that does happen, invites will start flooding inboxes and the Channel is going to do what it does best: network. People will be ready to talk business and everyone is going to want to stretch their legs and start building face-to-face relationships again, so don’t forget to confirm any event plans for later in the year and set up a contingency plan, on the off chance future events are still affected.



PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

When it comes to sales, current 'market uncertainty' may dissuade many businesses from making a considered purchase, until markets gain confidence and predictability. In the meantime, businesses should be considering both short- and long-term initiatives that will prevent 'uncertainty' from being used as an excuse for sales not reaching their expected conclusion.

B2B4S – A NEW ROUTE TO MARKET?

If there's one issue that coronavirus has thrust into the spotlight, it's internet access for remote workers. Questions are now starting to be asked around whether or not ISPs and resellers should offer connectivity for staff home connections too (Business to Business for Staff). Though connectivity is just the tip of the iceberg; telephony, managed security services and remote working products, that are now seen as more than just 'nice-to-haves', may all necessitate a new, albeit highly adapted route to market.

NON-HUMAN INTERACTION PRODUCTS

Businesses may want to consider how to better design products and services to be 'Plug & play', reducing the necessity for installations or engineer call-outs and preventing a backlog of install appointments. Also consider any ongoing maintenance; can a product be transitioned to a cloud-based platform, so that it can be adjusted and maintained remotely, instead of on site?


SHORTEN SALES CYCLE

While the opportunity for face-to-face meetings is non-existent, businesses should consider how to shorten the sales cycle or reduce the CapEx cost, so that salespeople are not so reliant on in-person negotiation tactics and 'the long sell' for considered purchases.

For example, transitioning to an OpEx model, shorter contracts that reduce cost to try, a 2-week trial license or even free 'taster' products could be leveraged, to get prospects over that final hurdle. While businesses certainly shouldn't be (or even appear to be) taking advantage of the current situation, the cogs of industry still must turn, otherwise the economic effect of coronavirus will snowball.

Businesses should still look to sell where the sale is appropriate; focusing on streamlining the product sales cycle, increasing operational agility and leveraging automation, businesses can develop a more creative, adaptable marketing strategy that refuses to be influenced or negated by the current climate.

Whatever your needs, Blabbermouth can help support your business and walk you step-by-step through this unprecedented digital marketing evolution. So, get in touch today and we'll be in touch (virtually) soon.



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