

During the coronavirus crisis, business as usual has come to a complete halt. It's been business as unusual.

After all, these are difficult days. During this pandemic, our priorities have shifted to taking care of ourselves and our loved ones, our friends and our family, our colleagues and our neighbors.

Our work is important, but our lives are at stake.

How do you communicate to your customers and prospects? What do

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Demonstrate your empathy. Show your concern. Tell them you have their backs. Put yourself in their shoes. Everyone is struggling. Everyone is scrambling. No one wants to be

will appreciate a hand.

People want to contribute to the solution themselves, too. Maybe you can start a fundraising campaign to support those on the front lines or collaborate with your followers and fans to provide free services and expertise to individuals who are less fortunate than others.

Put yourself in your audience's shoes. What would you want to hear from your organization if you were them? Can you give any products and services away? Can you offer a substantial discount

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outbreak, I began talking about the emerging crisis on social media. It has been the primary focus of all my videos—which I have been doing regularly for years—since March 13. That day, I recorded my message from Copley Square in Boston, talking about how important it was for brands and businesses to show that they were aware of the worsening health situation in their advertising and marketing campaigns.

but to stay healthy, too.”

The next message I delivered on video was to members of the American Marketing Association Boston. As president of the chapter, I wanted to make sure our audience knew that we were following the guidelines put out by the CDC and other healthcare officials, cancelling all future in-person events until further notice and planning some virtual events instead.

Those were just three of the many

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE DURING BUSINESS AS UNUSUAL

BY BOB CARGILL

you say? What do you do?

The first step to take is to pause all your existing advertising and marketing messages until you've had a chance to review them and determine if they are still relevant during these

Maintain a positive, uplifting tone of voice.

difficult days. Chances are, they need to be shelved for the time being and replaced by entirely new messages that are more reflective of the times.

This is not the time to be selling aggressively, if you're even going to be selling at all. This is the time to show the

on the receiving end of sales pitches now.

That doesn't mean you can't increase the value of your business during this difficult time. So don't disappear from sight. Quite the contrary. Using social media, online meeting platforms, chat services,

text, email, direct mail and, yes, the good, old-fashioned telephone, show up on a regular basis just to say hello and ask people how they are doing today.

Anything you can do to help others—especially those less fortunate than you—will be greatly appreciated. Everybody

on what you have to offer? Can you educate, entertain or enlighten those on the receiving end of your messages in a timely, relevant fashion? You can certainly lend them your ear.

Respond promptly to their questions and comments. Give them the benefit of the doubt if they have a problem with anything having to do with your company. Make sure to acknowledge what's going on in the world. But don't dwell on it. Maintain a positive, uplifting tone of voice, but don't ignore the gravity of this public health crisis. You don't want to appear tone-deaf.

Now is the time to be as authentic, transparent and immediate as possible

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I applauded CVS for responding so quickly in offering to deliver all prescribed medications to its customers for free.

Just a couple days later, back in Boston with my wife, Barbara, I shot a quick

messages I've recorded on video since the early days of this pandemic.

I have also had conversations via Zoom for both my podcast and YouTube channel with industry professionals such as Avidia Bank's Katelin Cwieka, Rapport International's Wendy Pease and social media consultant, Meaghan Edelstein, each time around focusing on marketing during the pandemic.

I have tried to be relevant and timely in everything I have published on social media since the onset of the coronavirus crisis without going overboard. Business has gone on, sure, but it has not been business as usual. I still talk about marketing and social media. I still teach

Be as authentic, transparent and immediate as possible with each of your clients.

in your communications. That is always the case in times of crises and disasters, only this time it's even more so. We've never seen anything like this pandemic.

Near the beginning of the coronavirus

video along the Harborwalk about social distance and social media, reminding people that, “During this time of keeping a social distance from one another, we can use social media to not just stay in touch,

marketing to college students. I still create and share content on behalf of my clients. But I don't forget to acknowledge the seriousness of what's going in this world more often than not. 🌱



<https://youtu.be/bY9p1h9KRKE>

The Human Side
This is the Time to Show the Human Side of Your Brand
March 31, 2020

In these uncertain times, countless brands are adjusting their #Advertising and #Marketing messages. What about you? This is not the time to think you can just set it and forget it when it comes to communicating with your customers and constituents, especially on #SocialMedia. This is not the time for your canned sales pitches. This is the time to reach out to your audience and ask how you can help them. During this pandemic, your business may still be in operation, but your focus should not just be on your bottom line, it should be on doing what you can for the greater good. This is the time to show the human side of your brand. This is the time to speak honestly about how the health crisis is affecting you, your organization and the industry in which you work. Thankfully, my family and I are doing just fine so far. I've been very busy lately, too, writing copy and content for my clients, teaching marketing—virtually—to my students, writing my book and working on other projects. What about you? I hope you and yours are well during this coronavirus crisis. This is the time to use technologies and tools to let people hear from you—family, friends, colleagues, customers, neighbors, even complete strangers. This is the time to reach out and touch others online.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob Cargill is the current president of the American Marketing Association Boston and was the New England Direct Marketing Association's "Direct Marketer of the Year" in 2009. Read more about Bob at thebobcargill.com and learn how he can help you use social media and marketing communications to bring out the best in your personal or corporate brand.