

How to master your marketing during

COVID-19



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Lilac James Co. Ltd

Introduction

With the outbreak of COVID-19 there are many restrictions placed on our lives. During economic downturns, people and businesses set stricter spending priorities. If sales start to fall businesses often seek to reduce marketing expenditure to save costs, but history will demonstrate this is a mistake.

It makes perfect business sense to contain costs in these hard times, but these hard times will pass and having studied recession marketing during our marketing degrees and higher education over the years it is clear that the businesses who adapt, rather than cut, their marketing output are the ones who will prosper.

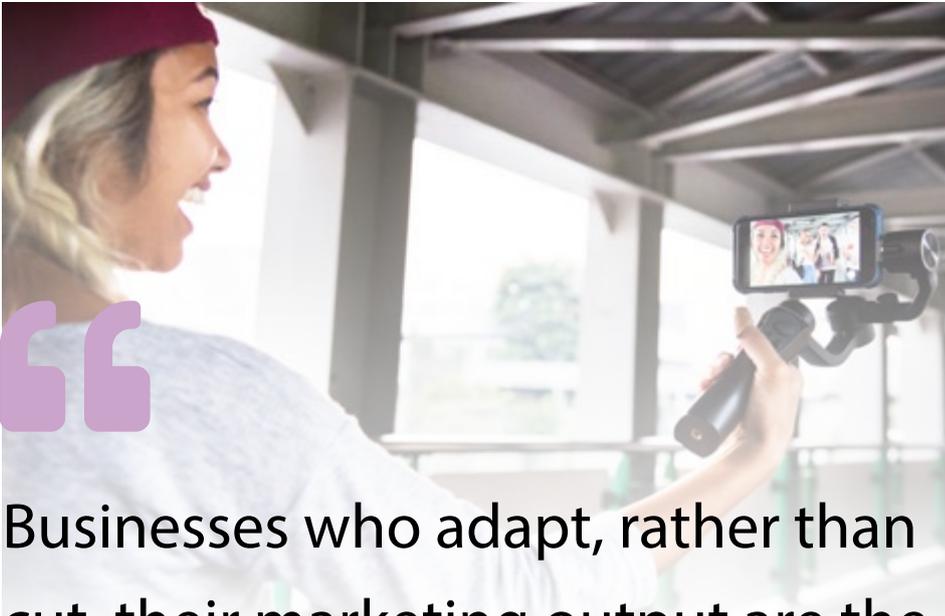
With huge amounts of individuals now working from home, more and more people will be utilising the internet on a regular basis. Coupled with this is the fact that many businesses will unwisely reduce their marketing output. This presents a rare opportunity with more potential customers being online, with less competition for their attention.

In times of scarcity, people aspire to certain products and services. Your target customers will have greater amounts of time to dream and research aspirational products and services that they may ultimately go on to buy when the crisis is over.

In the following steps, we'll share out insights that will equip you with ideas and strategy to adapt your marketing output during this crisis, so you can not only survive, but prosper.

If you would like any marketing advice please reach out to us via info@lilacjames.com

Lilac James was established during the financial crisis and recession of 2008 and subsequently we understand how your business and marketing needs to adapt in line with changes in consumer behaviour.



Businesses who adapt, rather than cut, their marketing output are the ones who will prosper.

Introduction

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01

Understanding consumer psychology during a recession.

It's early days, but COVID-19 appears to have started an economic downturn. We have recently enjoyed one of the longest periods of economic growth in history, with the last recession being in 2008-2009. COVID-19 may be the catalyst to tip the world into its next recession so it is critical we understand how consumer behaviour will change during COVID-19 and how consumer behaviour will change during a recession.

Businesses and marketers have long understood that consumer behaviour changes during times of uncertainty and recession, and yet each recession is different, so it would be naïve to simply roll out what worked best in 2008/2009.

During the 2008/2009 recession, credit was in short supply and as such businesses with cash reserves could capitalise on their competitors reduced marketing expenditure to grow their market share. At present, there are signs that businesses are tightening their belts, but credit remains widely available.

Should your competitors reduce their marketing output, by simply keeping yours the same, and certainly by increasing it, you stand the best chance to increase your market share. For many, it is cheaper to increase market share in a downturn as the marketplace becomes less crowded.



02

Identifying and Understanding changes in client's behaviour

It is absolutely imperative that your business seeks to understand the changes in your clients behaviour and adapts it's marketing strategy accordingly.

Simply put, what you were doing yesterday may not work best today. That said, doing something is normally always better than doing nothing.

Consumer behaviour will change quickly, so we need to have systems in place to consistently monitor and adapt to changing consumer behaviour.

Here are some tools to help you do so:

Google Analytics

I would suggest doing a deep dive and analysis of your websites Google Analytics to understand the user flow of your website. Hopefully you already have a grasp of your web visitors general behaviour when they visit your website, but you should seek to understand:

- How users are arriving on your website. Via SEO, Social Media, Direct, Referral etc...
- Where are they landing when they arrive?
- How long do they stay for?
- Do they move around your website and where do they go?
- What is your level of conversion (whether this be a sale, completed contact form, newsletter sign up etc...)
- You can also understand where your visitors go after visiting your website.

You should conduct this analysis for both before COVID-19 and after, seeking to identify any changes in user behaviour. This will allow you to draw conclusions about what content your website user and target customer are engaging with and which type of content they are consuming less of.

From here you can make data based decisions about how best to adapt your marketing strategy. Remember, after you have made changes, you must measure the results and be prepared to continuously adapt going forwards.

To assist with Google Analytics we've uploaded 6 beginner level videos which will assist you navigating the platform and setting it up to service your business needs.

Visit: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2W9uHXJzhGzKEUPW-TuHUzg?view_as=subscriber

Google Trends

Google trends is a tool where you can monitor various search related trends. This can be really useful to assess what type of content people are looking for or whether demand has shifted for any of your products or services.

For example, we know the airline industry is struggling due to all the cancellations at present, however when I searched for 'flight bookings' you can see that search demand has actually increased:



On top of this, Google trends gives us a list of 'related queries'. From this the results are really revealing:

Related queries		Rising	Download	Compare	Share
1	best days to book flights online	+4,250%			
2	justfly.com book cheap flights	+4,200%			
3	when to book domestic flights	+400%			
4	best time to book christmas flights	+200%			

What the above highlights is that people are still hugely interested in booking flights, with a 4250% increase in searches for 'best days to book flights online' airlines would be foolish not to be publishing content around these key search terms.

Over the last 7 days the search term 'cheap flights right now' has risen 180%.

What this tells us, is that demand is still there but given there are restrictions on supply this demand cannot be met. When restrictions are lifted, we anticipate it being like taking a cork off a shaken champagne bottle, so if airlines can, we would heavily advise continuing with their marketing output, but adapting to answer their client questions and fears now, so they can attract and service a future rush of demand. The airlines that can ride out this rough patch will be in a hugely advantageous position when restrictions are lifted.

Keyword Research

Another great tool is Google's Keyword Planner.

The Keyword planner will allow you to see almost exactly how many people are searching for various keywords and search terms on Google's platform, it also displays a small line graph showing how the demand for that keyword is changing.

An example of using this to best effect is with several of our regional and national cleaning clients. Here, we used Google's Keyword Planner to review current search levels for all their targeted keywords. We expanded our search to consider whether people were specifically searching for COVID-19 cleaning

or similar terms. We found they were not, however, they were searching in increasing numbers for 'deep cleaning' related searches, so the marketing strategy shifted to provide more content, landing pages and offers to target this change in consumer behaviour and demand.



03

Redefining your customer segmentation

Broadly speaking, a recession will trigger certain consumer behaviours that can be split into four main groups:

1. Consumers who slam on the breaks.

These are individuals who are hit the hardest by COVID-19 and as a result have to take drastic action to cut costs, at the moment this would include those in events, travel and the hospitality sector amongst others.

2. Consumers who desire your product/service but who are more patient than usual before making a purchasing decision.

These individuals are those partly affected, often in a knock on effect, by the COVID-19 or recession but who still have a need and desire for your product or service. You may find these individuals usually took, for example, a month to move from prospect to sale however in this climate this may take significantly longer, with a heavier requirement for you to establish trust and confidence with them before making a purchasing decision.

3. Consumers for whom very little changes.

Some people, in some sectors will be largely unaffected by COVID-19 and the recession, and if you can identify which types of customers you have that will be unaffected, you can switch your marketing to largely target them.

For example, at Lilac James we do a lot of work in the private education sector. This sector has a great deal to manage regarding COVID-19 but they're bottom line is likely to be largely unaffected, they also have requirements to generate student leads in lieu of new terms starting in September.

4. People who prosper from a recession.

Some people and businesses will prosper during COVID-19 and any recession. For example, television streaming services like Netflix, computer gaming and food delivery services will all do well.

By analysing which of your customers fit into these broad categories you can start to consider how this effects your marketing strategy, and you can adapt accordingly.

Next we'll talk about the customer journey and how the basic customer journey model A.I.D.A can be applied to today's situation.

04

Customer Journey – A.I.D.A – and how this may change.

The basic model we'll use to describe customer journeys here is the AIDA model.

Awareness

Interest

Desire

Action

A successful marketing strategy usually considers its activity in each of these four stages plus its three moments of truth:

1. Zero Moment of Truth
2. First Moment of Truth
3. Second Moment of Truth

Prior to the internet, marketers spoke of the First Moment of Truth, which was about when your potential customer walked up to the shelf and were faced with a variety of similar products, marketers asked 'why should they pick my product over others' and 'how can I communicate that to them at this moment'. Generally this came down to prior messaging and advertising, as well as your branding and packaging.

The second moment of truth came after the purchase was made, and was about having an exceptional customer experience and strategies in place to encourage your new customer to continue making purchases, or to make greater purchases from your business.

In the internet age however, consumer behaviour has changed, and we now have a Zero Moment of Truth. This moment occurs when a consumer is anywhere between the Awareness and Desire phase and refers to their behaviour prior to making a purchase where they typically conduct a great deal of research.

Consumers will check reviews, YouTube videos, LinkedIn profiles, Google Business Accounts, blogs, content and social media profiles to ensure they're making the correct purchase. Research shows that prior to making a purchasing decision, consumers will generally engage with your business for 7 hours, across 11 different touch points, on 4 separate platforms.

Ever noticed how in the days following speaking to a prospect they will soon review your LinkedIn profile?

That's ZMOT and that's just the visible part.

05

What is A.I.D.A and how can I apply my marketing to it?

The A.I.D.A model is a series of cognitive stages consumers go through during the buying process for a product or service. It's an effectively simple way of segmenting your marketing to attract consumers and support them at all stages through the buying process with the right messaging at the right time.

Awareness phase

This phase is quite simply when your target customer becomes aware of your business/service/product.

This stage is about creating brand awareness and affiliation with your product or service.

In this phase we consider our outreach strategy, during COVID-19 and any recession, not a great deal changes in the awareness phase, but opportunity should exist to reach more people for less cost as competition for marketing reduces and more and more people will be online due to necessary restrictions.

There are many ways to conduct an effective outreach strategy and this will largely depend on who you are seeking to attract. Prior to conducting a fresh outreach campaign, consider any possible behavioural change in your usual target customer in light of COVID-19 and subsequent recession, your typical customer in February 2020 may look entirely different today.

Typical platforms used in this area include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Google and YouTube as you can reach many thousands of people for relatively little cost.

REMEMBER – In order to track the individuals who are moving into the Interest phase you must install relevant Pixels.

A Pixel will allow the platform you are utilising to assess the effectiveness of your marketing, recording details of visitors to your website.

Interest Phase

In this awareness phase you will have conducted some outreach and prospects will have become aware of your business, products and services.

Now we must ask, how will we gain their interest? And specifically, how will we gain their interest during COVID-19 and any subsequent recession when their priorities may have shifted?

Video is by far the most engaging content you can offer, followed closely by pictures. See our blog on increasing Facebook engagement below:

<https://www.lilacjames.com/marketing/how-to-increase-organic-facebook-engagement-like-a-pro/>

If you successfully get your prospects interest your ZMOT will begin.

To win your ZMOT and keep your prospects interest you will need to ensure you have:

- Reviews. If you have few reviews, consider a proactive strategy to acquire more genuine and credible reviews from clients.
- Case studies. Real life case studies of where your product or service has really benefited people in their current situation, the more recent and relevant to people's current situation the better.
- Blogs. What content would your client possibly be interested in, seek to engage, educate and entertain.
- YouTube videos. It's the worlds second largest search engine, consumer behaviour today demonstrates that consumers will more likely than not search for your product or service on YouTube.
- Email marketing. Email sequences can be a great way of continuing to build prospects interest over extended periods of time.

Remember that during COVID-19 and a subsequent recession the interest phase may last longer than normal due to restricted spending and therefore it is more important than ever to have an abundance of content online.

Desire Phase

How do we make our product or service desirable in this current climate? And how do we communicate that to our prospects?

The desire phase can be short lived and prospects could move freely between interest and desire, generally speaking there are only a few things that will move individuals from interest to desire:

1. Your marketing and content.
2. Their circumstances.

Consider an individual who has a leak under her sink, prior to COVID-19 she may have searched online for a local plumber and found your advert on Google, she was driven to your website and reviewed some of your content. She leaves your website and checks your reviews to ensure you're trustworthy. Once satisfied she picks up the phone and you soon make a sale to repair the leak.

During COVID-19 the same persons budget may be restricted, she's concerned about finances and opts to fix the problem herself. She goes online and finds your advert on Google, she is again driven to your website and reviews some of your content but this time she reviews a blog on the dangers of leaving this issue unresolved. The blog points her towards a DIY video where someone within your business takes her step by step through the process required to resolve the issue. You've now built really good credibility with this person, you've provided significant free value to her and she trusts you.

She may fix the issue herself, she may put a sticking plaster on it until the COVID-19 issue improves, she may even make it worse... either way, when she makes the decision to utilise a plumbers services, you have a significant head start on any competitor.

Action Phase

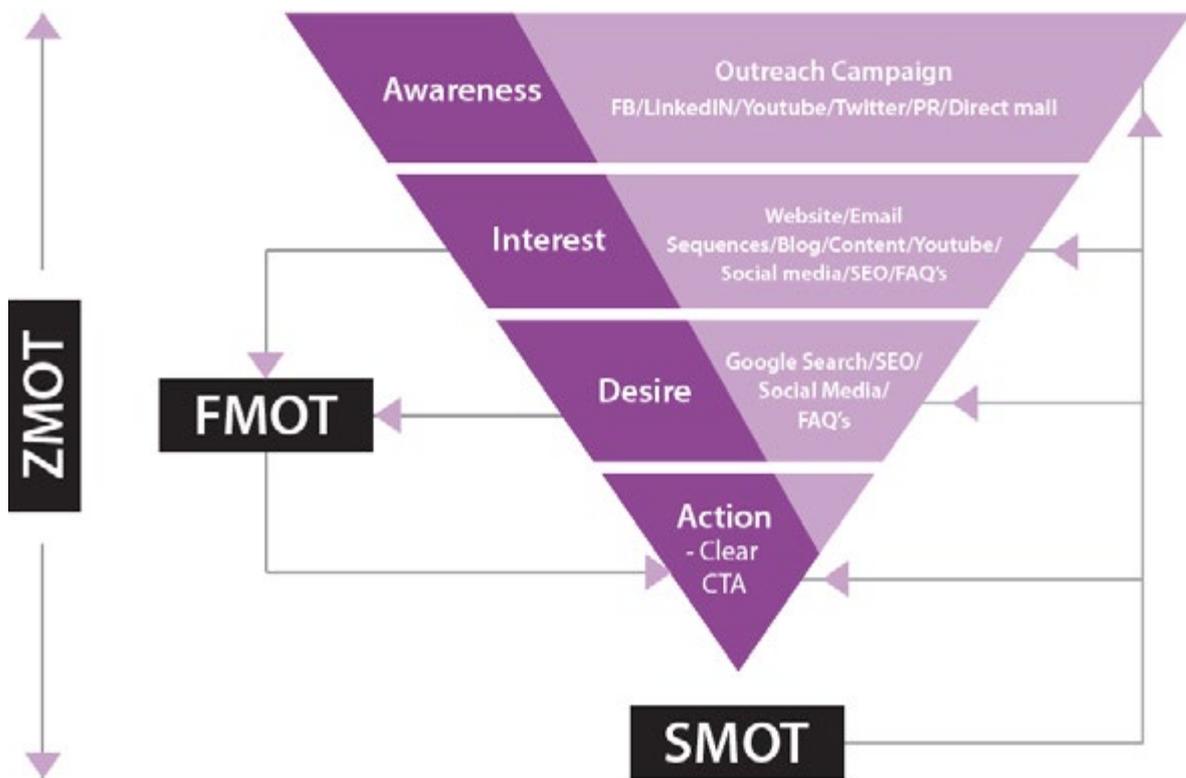
This phase concerns what we need to do to get people to take action and

make a purchasing decision. This should be as easy and obvious as possible for your target client and all this new content you're creating should have clear calls to action.

At each stage, with each bit of content, we need to be thinking "what is the one thing I want the consumer to do next" and clearly communicate that in the content.

For example, in Lilac James' promotional video we end it with a clear call to action "get in touch for a free consultation", a link then appears to a testimonial video.

See the diagram below which should visually demonstrate the A.I.D.A model with the various moments of truth and how each stage can flow towards Action.



Ensure your business website is set up with Google Analytics and Pixels to measure activity and retarget audience.

An example:

To stick with the plumber above; Janet owns a plumbing business and employs 6 people. Sales are down as people are beginning to self-isolate and aren't welcoming plumbers into their home through fear of contamination.

Customer Behaviour: Janet identified this fear of contamination and adjusts her business practices to ensure her team are following the latest advice on preventing contamination. She instructs her team to wear protective goggles and face masks when on house visits and ensures all her vehicles are cleaned and equipped with hand sanitiser.

Now she's addressed her customers concerns Janet needs to communicate this to her potential customers to make them aware.

Awareness: Janet adjusts the copy on her website to reflect the latest situation with COVID-19 and the necessary steps her company are taking to address customer concerns.

Janet launches a Facebook campaign targeted at her traditional target market highlighting their changes in practice, the Facebook campaign leads with a video of Janet personally speaking to her target market and contains footage of Janet in protective equipment visiting an address to complete plumbing work.

Janet has Facebook pixel's installed across her website to track user flow and potentially retarget any clients who visit certain pages.

Interest: Janet starts building a suite of DIY YouTube videos showing people how to fix or maintain common plumbing issues if they can't access a plumber,

this keeps her target market interested and engaged with her brand.

Janet launches a service whereby customers can do video calls with her team who can remotely diagnose issues without the need for a house visit.

She targets another Facebook advert, using her pixel data, at people who have visited her website from her initial Facebook advert. This advert launches the new remote diagnoses service and encourages people to book appointments.

Desire: Janet creates a series of blog content that help target customers understand the dangers of allowing problems to go unresolved, these blogs have a clear call to action and encourage people to utilise the remote diagnosis service to discuss issues.

Action: Once people are making contact with the remote diagnosis service Janet is in a position to begin discussions about making a sale.

ZMOT: Janet's business and personal LinkedIn and social media profiles are fully completed and professional, as are those of her 6 employees. Her YouTube channel is populated with video testimonials and educational content, her blogs answer common FAQ's and address how her company are adapting to COVID-19. Janet has enough content spread across multiple platforms for her target customer to engage with.

FMOT: Janet's business looks professional, her website is up to date and functions well, she is well branded and stands out from the crowd.

SMOT: Janet delivers a high-quality service to her customers that leaves them with a good impression, her team leave behind a brochure or leaflet after

visiting a clients home. Janet captures all her clients details on a database and follows up with an email sequence, adding value to those receiving the emails.

Each business will be different, and of course there are many more things Janet could do, the above is simply designed to give you a flavour of how you can apply the information.

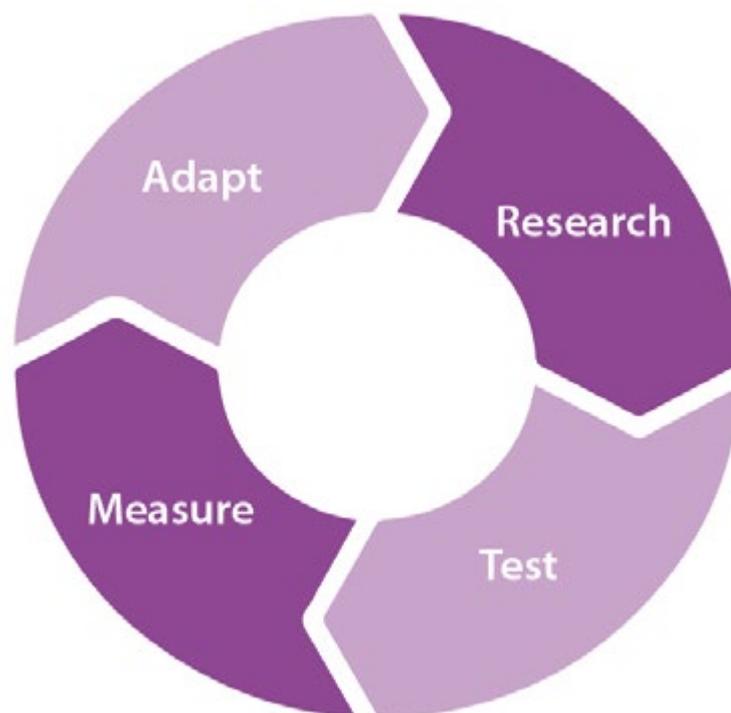


06

Maintain and adjust marketing output

We've been through how to adapt your marketing for the current situation in line with modern marketing models and consumer behaviour.

We must stress, that in this environment, consumer behaviour will change quickly so you must be engaged in a continuous process of Research, Test, Measure and Adapt. Always track your key metrics, and build enough data so you can make data driven decisions.



Now is NOT the time to drop your marketing output, if anything, it's a time to increase. During the second world war, Cadbury's were one of the few companies to continue significant marketing efforts, subsequently they established themselves as an aspirational product during wartime. At the conclusion of the war when normality slowly resumed, they experienced a boom in sales that lasted for decades.



07

Conclusion

Following the last recession of 2008/2009 we saw one of the biggest periods of sustained growth in history.

This COVID-19 crisis will eventually pass and when it does, there may be a period of recession but normality will slowly resume. When that happens you need to be in position to capitalise and experience demonstrates that those businesses who maintain marketing output, adapting and evolving with the changing market place, are by far the more likely to succeed.

We wish you every success in the future.

If you would like a free marketing consultation then please contact the Lilac James team at info@lilacjames.com