

Re-aligning Marketing and Customer Loyalty for Retailers During the Coronavirus

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The outbreak of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has hit the globe by storm. People are becoming more anxious by the day, fearing for the safety of themselves and their loved ones. Convenience stores are being sieged, as customers hoard stockpiles of everyday goods in preparation for prolonged seclusion. Travel agencies and retailers, on the other hand, are pushed to the brink of closure, due to everyone staying at home.

Don't Try to Sell, Try to Serve

These are disruptive times indeed, but there's still hope for your brand. **Instead of trying to sell, focus on serving your customers:** protect your relationship with your audience. Keep in mind that people will be spending more time at home, maybe in front of their computer or smartphone. They will want to keep their mind busy, and proactively look for engaging content.

This may be a time when you can help people by providing useful content, and offering services and benefits they actually need. Maintaining a solid relationship with your community in a time like this requires effort from your entire marketing department.

We sat together with our Marketing and Strategy and Insights teams to collect ideas that may help brands and retailers. **This article will help you with this monumental task, highlighting how to refocus your marketing and CRM efforts to build trust and consumer goodwill,** and help your audience throughout these uncertain times.

1. Make it Easier to Shop From Home

Despite the crisis, business never stops completely. People might avoid visiting stores, but this just means they'll shift their attention to online shopping (as long as home delivery services still work). In this sense, **the best course of action is to support your loyal customers by offering them the services they are looking for.** For instance, free shipping is one of the most sought-after benefits at the moment.

If you offer free shipping as part of your loyalty program, you should make the loyalty program easier to access temporarily to maintain people's interest and show goodwill. For example, **lower the point cost** necessary to activate it. If it's tied to [tiers](#), make sure

to put it into a lower bracket to entice online shoppers. The same goes for extended return periods.

2. Exercise Generosity With Your Loyalty Program

Speaking of loyalty programs, there are a couple of other tactics you can introduce to get on the good side of customers during hard times.

- **Consider extending the point expiration.** Loyalty points disappear if customers don't buy at the brand for a certain amount of time. In the case of the virus outbreak, people are forced to delay their purchases, therefore it's unfair to take away their hard-earned points. Show some kindness and extend the expiration deadline with a month or two.
- **Lower the point-price of rewards.** Loyalty programs are a carefully balanced system in terms of the rewards economy, but in such cases you can make an exception, and allow people to redeem some coupons or benefits for less.

3. Support Your Community With Content

With people resigning from traveling or partaking in public events, **they have a large amount of free time which they will mostly spend browsing the web** for news and helpful guides on how to survive the virus. Your goal should be to ensure they spend it with you. Instruct your marketing team to produce helpful content that will actually help in the everyday life of your customers.

- For instance, as an electronics outlet, you can send your newsletter subscribers a helpful guide on how to fix common household appliances on their own, and what kind of tools they would need for it.
- As a food and beverage company, you can advise on how to keep food fresh.
- Toy retailers can share simple game ideas for families to bond over.
- Healthstyle brands can show exercises that can be done at home and so on.

4. Utilize Your Human Resources to Give People Value

Guides and articles aren't the only content you should have in store for customers. You can **mobilize a large segment of your workforce**, especially if they are sitting at home, because your retail outlets are closed. These shop personnel are experts on your products, so you may ask them to **share this expertise through Facebook live sessions or webinars**.

This can be taken to the next level by **offering customer service online**. Fashion retailers could have their stylists be ready in shifts, giving the community fashion advice through social media. **Customers would no doubt be interested in spending their**

time at home proactively. More importantly, getting the chance to interact with your experts in a direct manner would strengthen brand love.

5. Move from Physical to Digital

It's a sad fact, but for some time, people have been less likely to leave their home and visit brick-and-mortar stores. This isn't a choice they make lightly, however, and **many of them surely miss the experience of visiting their favorite shopping destinations.** With some innovative digital solutions, you can fill the void in their heart.

Virtual showrooms and virtual stylists are perfect additions to any beauty or fashion-oriented website, **allowing customers to spend time trying on clothes in the virtual space,** and daydreaming about the new look they can have once the virus has been stopped. You may only need to hire a videographer with a 360' camera to do so, and upload it to your website. This can help people see your products, even if you don't do it as professionally with tagging products, as Karen Millen below.



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