

GROW YOUR BUSINESS & UNLOCK THE FUTURE

- a guide for business leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic

KRAFT designsmiths™



Business will never be the same

Our understanding of how to serve clients and create value has changed overnight. For some of us it's business as usual, while others need to significantly reinvent their business models in order to survive economic depression.



At KRAFT designsmiths™, we understand this tension.

Our team has decades of experience in moving from uncertainty to creating tangible value through business. Especially when it feels like the last thing you want to do is expand, now is the time to create the future of your company. It might not be how you imagined it, but then again, it may also catapult your business to heights you never dreamed of.



All you need right now is a credible guide.

Here are 10 practical steps you can take to be proactive during lockdown. These principles will not only enable your company to survive a potentially debilitating crisis, but will also build long-term resilience into your business.

Overview of the 10 steps



Take your business online



Adjust your business model



Engage your community



Actively support your customers



Strengthen your brand and message



Invest in your team



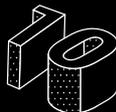
Design a quality customer experience journey



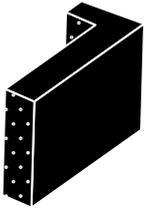
Launch a social responsibility initiative



Craft a relevant communication strategy



Publish your own COVID-19 public address



Take your business online

Sometimes the change you need to implement is obvious. If you're a knowledge worker and it's possible to set your team up remotely, the option to move your efforts to the virtual sphere is a no-brainer.

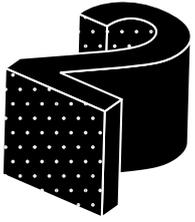
You may even decide to incorporate the most productive elements of flexible and remote working into your company practices long after the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided.

What you need now is the capacity to interact with your team online, and to design clever ways of delivering real-world value to your clients without being physically present.

If your main deliverables are already in electronic form, then there's no problem. If you're serving your clients through channels such as workshops, consultations and other interpersonal interactions, however, then you should investigate the extent to which online tools will make the transition not only possible but also more productive.

NEXT STEPS

1. Guide and equip your team to **operate efficiently from a remote location**.
2. Streamline your **online processes** to manage business assets and client deliverables effectively.
3. Redesign the way your team communicates to **share information and function optimally** in your new virtual setting.



Adjust your business model

It is challenging to think outside the known parameters of your target audience, products and services. But it is possible to pivot the way you do business during these challenging times by changing one or two variables.

The key is to identify your core competencies, and to reconfigure them to add value to a whole new market audience in a fresh way. We understand, it may seem easier said than done.

A great example of this is the multitude of American and European companies who literally retooled their production lines overnight, in order to make medical supplies and other essential goods such as hand-sanitiser available to the masses.

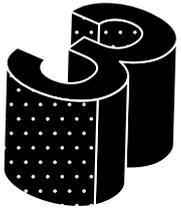
As the pandemic grips the West, global demand for a range of goods and services has faltered—from handbags and tourism to cars. That has freed capacity for industries to produce medical equipment in short supply.

Wall Street Journal, 19 March 2020

Granted, this is a proverbial cut-to-the-bone type approach for surviving a crisis. But, if that is what it takes to keep your business afloat and your team employed, then it is worth a try.

NEXT STEPS

1. Identify your **business's core** competencies.
2. Redesign and implement the way you **add value** according to what is in demand.
3. Design a **distribution method** that can operate under lockdown restrictions.



Engage your community

Making sure you keep the communication lines open between your business and your community is always important, but even more so in times when you can't physically interact with them on a daily basis. By community, we mean your past, present and future customers; your audience, your partners, and the public in general. Engage with your audience in ways that informs and inspires them.



Businesses that make their customers' lives a little bit easier and happier in times like this will be hard to be forgotten. Now is the time to prove yourself to your customers. [Samual Ayobami, Bami Brands](#)

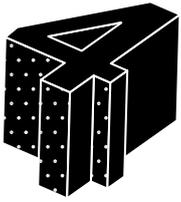
Even though it may seem as if there are much more important things to focus on at times like these, content creation is one of the best ways to make sure your business doesn't lose contact with the world. Pinterest has created a useful [guide](#) for engaging your audience through content under the COVID-19 pandemic.

Creating content during a crisis can be a difficult balancing act. On the one hand, failing to acknowledge the current state can feel tone-deaf. On the other hand, without a delicate touch, copy can come off as opportunistic or insensitive. To strike the right chord, you need to create content that feels authentic, compassionate and most importantly - helpful. [Pinterest, 28 March 2020](#)

Remember that meaningful engagement is always a two-way street, so keep the dialogue going with your community.

NEXT STEPS

1. Determine your audience's **unique needs and pain-points** during the pandemic.
2. Create, commission or source **content that addresses** each of these pain-points.
3. Schedule to **publish your content over time on channels** and platforms that resonate with your audience.



Actively support your customers

Uncertainty about the future and fear of what's to come isn't reserved exclusively to any sector or industry. If it's true for you, it's probably true for your customers.

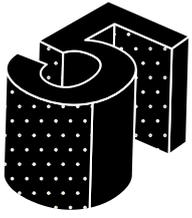
You can play a significant role in supporting your customers when they feel they have nowhere to turn to during these testing times.

Although there are many ways to support your customers based on your specific relationship and reach; in times of severe crisis it's often just the thought of reaching out that counts. Realistically, it may not be within your power to bail your customers out financially, or to help their businesses to survive, but you can give them your empathetic reassurance. .

Support isn't only commercial or logistical in nature. But, if possible, there are ways you can help to alleviate pressure off your customers. Some practices that businesses have recently implemented to support their customers include offering discounts, relaxed or removed paywalls, limited all-access passes, free upgrades, and opening restrictive gateways.

NEXT STEPS

1. Resolve to play a **supporting role** for your customers in any way you can.
2. Provide a list of **relational, logistical and financial options** that will be helpful to them.
3. Find ways to **inform and deliver on your promises** that don't compromise your own business.



Strengthen your brand and message

All businesses need to rethink traditional ways of connecting with their audience and learn new ways of communicating that make sense in a post-COVID world.

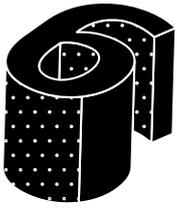
Evaluating the relevance and reach of your existing brand is one of the best investments you can make in your business. It will also help you to address the needs of your customers directly.

A proper brand review focuses on three key factors. First, you need to align your high-level business strategy. Second, make sure your brand messaging is clear and that your brand's visual identity is effectively designed. Third, ensure that every platform, channel and communication item is fully representative of your brand. It should be integrated and consistent with your business's purpose and plan.

In a world where pretty much everything is in flux, making sure your brand communicates in a clear and confident way is more important than ever.

NEXT STEPS

1. Assess the relevance and **positioning of your existing brand**.
2. Initiate a **brand review** to make the necessary adjustments to your strategy.
3. Roll your brand out in a way that **impresses your audience** without confusing them.



Invest in your team

The most powerful resource in your business is its people. Regardless of your sector or service, your team is what will cause you to either soar or sink in a time of crisis.

Make sure you keep close personal tabs on your team's emotional and physical wellbeing. If you haven't executed regular one-on-one sessions with your team before, now is a great time to start.



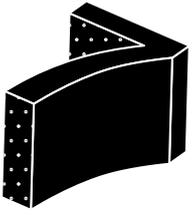
The only way to build resilient and collaborative teams is by practicing empathy. [Michael Ventura, Author: Applied Empathy](#)

Create seamless avenues of information that don't add to the noise which is already out there. By establishing clear lines of internal communication, you will help everyone on your team to feel calm, focused and productive.

Finally, ensure the resources your team needs are readily and easily accessible to them.. This can include everything from additional hardware and software for a remote office, to any resources that will help them to stay motivated in their virtual space.. Don't underestimate the ability for your team to upskill themselves and to learn new ways to work while they have a bit more time on their hands. Investigate if this should be a secondary focus for your work team during the lockdown period.

NEXT STEPS

1. Draw up a **frequent check-in schedule** for your team.
2. Reassess the **work tools you use** and adjust the arsenal where necessary.
3. Collect content and resources that will help to **inspire and inform** them. Make sure these resources are **readily available** for your team.



Design a quality customer experience journey

Your business is only as good as your customers' experiences.. This includes every single interaction: from marketing, to sales, to service.

You can start creating a CX journey that converts customers to loyal brand advocates by plotting their main interaction points with your brand. From there, make sure that you intentionally design experiences which your customers will enjoy at each of these engagements.

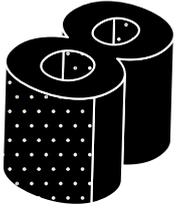
There are many ways to go about creating your unique customer journey, however the same basic principles apply to all of them:

- Identify key moments of engagement.
- Mapping your desired outcomes.
- Creating the necessary tools, content and channels to execute your strategy.

Once you have your plan in place, make sure your whole team understands and supports not only the customer experience map, but also the resources that will make it a reality.

NEXT STEPS

1. Plot **10 to 12 key points of engagement** that your customers have with your business.
2. Draft **clear outcomes** for each of these moments.
3. Create the **resources and tools necessary** to facilitate every moment and experience.



Launch a social responsibility initiative

Although it may seem counterintuitive to focus outward at a time when businesses are hunkering down and protecting themselves, it could just be the right thing at the right time.

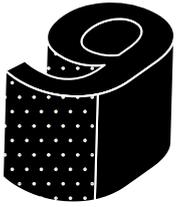
Using your business for good in times of extreme need is not only beneficial for the greater economy; it also sends out a clear message to colleagues, clients and other stakeholders that your business lives for a purpose greater than its own.

A word of caution: avoid reactionary giving that results in a hit-and-run type of social responsibility. Rather, identify a worthy cause championed by a responsible non-profit and start to build a meaningful connection with it over time. If your current network doesn't include any social responsibility connections, investigate what is out there before blankly writing a check to tick a box.

Finally, corporate giving doesn't always need to be monetary in nature. Mobilising your team to invest time, resources or expertise could be even more valuable than donating money.

NEXT STEPS

1. Assess the **most pressing social needs** in your area or industry.
2. Identify a reputable **non-profit organisation to partner** with.
3. Allow the charity to **dictate the terms of your agreement**, as well as how you can help them most effectively.



Craft a relevant communication strategy

Nothing hurts a business more than being apathetic. Your audience needs to know you're actively involved not only in your own business, but that you care about their lives and the matters of the broader community.

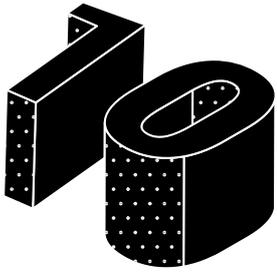
Using business 'downtime' to craft a meaningful communication campaign shows that although your physical location might be on lockdown, your customers are still top of mind for your business.

The best marketing or communication campaigns connect the immediate objectives of the business with the relevant talking points of its audience. On the one hand, the business shouldn't come across as being desperate for sales without addressing the needs of its audience; while on the other hand, it needs to tactfully funnel the audience towards its solution for their problems.

It takes time, effort and an acute insight into the nature of your audience in order to design and deploy a communication campaign that actually converts browsers into buyers.

NEXT STEPS

1. List your **3 top immediate business objectives** and connect them with 3 burning talking points for your audience.
2. Design a messaging framework that tactfully **guides the audience from addressing their pain-points** to fulfilling the outcomes you desire for your business.
3. Design the necessary content and **strategically publish it** on all the relevant channels and platforms.



Publish your own COVID-19 public address

Consider addressing the looming crisis head-on as your first try at creating a hard-hitting communication campaign.

When using public distress as a talking point for a business communication campaign, however, take extra care to be sincere and authentic as you reach out to your audience.

Messages that should come through loud and clear include:

We acknowledge the **disruption in the personal and professional lives** of many people.

Our business stays **committed to support and help our customers** where we can.

These are the ways in which we are **prioritising the health of both our team and the public**.

These are the ways in which we continue to **serve our customer-base**.

A brief glimpse of what people can **expect from your business** in a post-lockdown world.

A **call-to-action** that your audience can respond to immediately.



Prepare for the lasting effects of a temporary crisis

Although the lockdown crisis won't last forever, the effects might leave a permanent impression on your business. Ensure you navigate this opportunity so that your business emerges on the other end as a resilient entity which is still relevant and useful to your customer-base.

Yes, your business may change. It might even evolve to an unrecognisable version of itself. Whatever happens, let us not sit idly and allow present circumstances to dictate our actions.



We can't predict what the aftermath of COVID-19 will look like, or how long this period of flux will last. What we can do is make the most out of it and think about how our professional lives will look like once the dust has settled. Lindsay Tigar, Fast Co Magazine

Be proactive. Let's do what we can to build resilient businesses that not only create tangible value in times of hardship; but which become places of refuge for those hardest hit among us.



LOCKDOWN, NOT SHUTDOWN

The KRAFT designsmiths™ team is ready to advise and help where we can. Don't hesitate to contact our business specialists to co-create your lockdown strategy.

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