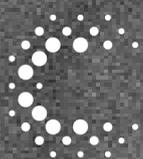


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# COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS

HOW TO ADJUST YOUR MARKETING  
MESSAGING IN SENSITIVE TIMES



THE  
CREATIVE  
COPYWRITER

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# WHAT'S COMING UP...

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00



# INTRODUCTION

SENSITIVE TIMES CALL FOR SENSITIVE MEASURES



# SENSITIVE TIMES CALL FOR SENSITIVE MEASURES

“Keep calm and carry on” was the overused and reigning marketing message of the decade.

And it's sound advice, to some extent.

In the face of a crisis, you can't always carry on in the exact same way you were before.

Your carrying on needs adjusting.

Sure, be stoic. Be persistent. Be unstoppable. But above all, be sensitive to your surroundings and your customers.

Look around at the world right now. In the midst of Covid-19, whole countries have pretty much shut down in a matter of weeks. And this has impacted millions of businesses with very little warning.

We're now achingly aware that no business is immune to a crisis.

And brands who stick their heads in the sand simply won't survive.

We've seen brands try to carry on as though the whole world hasn't completely changed in the past month, leading consumers to ask “are they completely oblivious to what's going on out there?!”.

Emotions are running high. People might feel scared and anxious, worried about the future, uncertain, sad, and even angry. At the same time, they might be facing some pretty serious life changes, like unemployment, financial difficulties,

and ill health.

All of this means that the people you're talking to think and behave very differently during a crisis.

And that means you have to change the way you speak to them.

Crises call for sensitivity and understanding. Not trying to sell with everything you've got.

Fail to do so, and you can come across as opportunistic and trying to take advantage of a bad situation. We've all been party to some cringe-fest advertising before brands wised up to what's what.

Take KFC, for example. Their Finger Lickin' campaign (which literally showed close up shots of people licking their fingers - something we've been told not to do) received upwards of 100 complaints in the first week it was aired.

It's now been paused - and rightly so.

While the COVID-19 outbreak has forced brands to focus on how they communicate in a crisis, it's important to be mindful when doing so in any crisis in the future too.

According to Bain, getting it right during the lean years (a.k.a. during a worldwide crisis) has a massive impact on companies' growth rates after things improve.

Companies that struggle post-recession have often "switched to survival mode, making deep cuts and reacting defensively". This means they later have to spend far more than they saved just to recover from their media absence.

Here's our guide on what to do, what not to do, and how to keep in contact with your audience during uncertain, scary, and very weird times.

**01**



# **PART ONE**

UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN A CRISIS

We have to generalise here, as the scope is just too wide. How consumers behave and how markets are affected varies from industry to industry.

Let's first have a peek at what any given market looks like when we're not in a crisis or recession. E.g. in those normal times before the COVID-19 outbreak (remember those?).

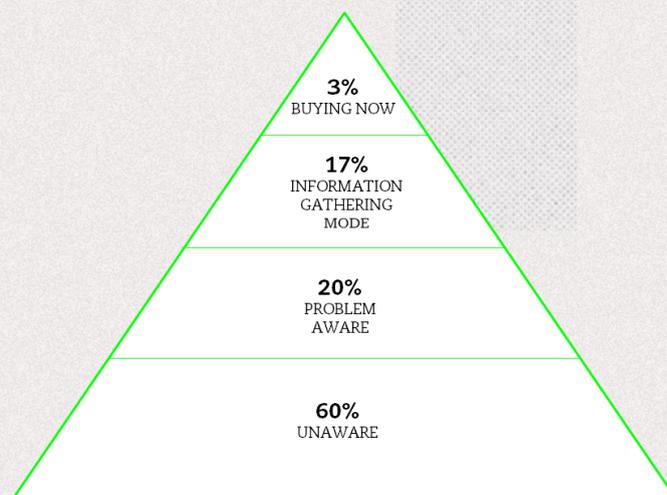
Under normal circumstances, brands can expect about 60% of their audience to fall into the 'unaware' stage of the marketing cycle. I.e. they aren't even aware of the challenges they might have that your product or solution could solve.

20% sit in the problem-aware stage. These people know they have a pain or problem, but don't yet know how to solve it.

Approximately 17% will be in information-gathering mode. They're actively fishing for solutions and comparing options.

And only 3% are in buying mode. I.e. prospects who have their credit cards out and are actually ready to buy.

## THE LARGER MARKET FORMULA (USUALLY)



This is why most websites only convert around 2.5% of visitors. Because most of those visitors are there to browse, not to buy. And also, often, because they have pretty shoddy value propositions and copy. But that's a different story.

The problem – again, in regular times – is that most companies go straight for the jugular and only market to that top 3%.

They want to sell, of course. But this creates a very competitive field to play in and almost completely ignores potential customers that need just a little more nurturing.

What these percentages show is that 97% of people aren't ready to buy yet.

They're in a state of uncertainty as they don't yet have enough knowledge, information or trust to make a buying decision.

Trying to sell to them is like proposing to someone you just met on Tinder. They're just not ready yet. They don't know you, they don't feel a connection, and they definitely aren't ready to walk down the aisle.

But still, brands force-feed them sales messages that don't match their state of mind.

This is a huge turn-off.

Instead, companies should be trying to match the temperature of their messaging to the temperature of their customer's buying intent.

And this is exactly why both content marketing and brand-building exist. And why they work so well.

Both are strategies that, in essence, help to attract, educate, and build trust with colder prospects. You'll warm those prospects up, build a relationship with them, and be front of mind as soon

as they're piping hot and ready to buy.

But these stats are only relevant under normal circumstances.

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## SO WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MARKET IN A CRISIS?

During a crisis, the situation changes.

And I'm sure you can imagine how.

Yep. In most markets, *even more* people are simply not ready or willing to buy.

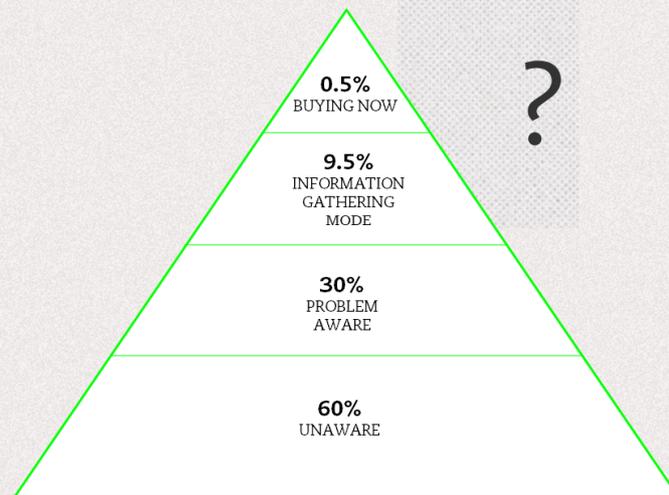
We might assume that only around 0.5% or 1% of audiences, on average, are now in buying mode. 9% - 9.5% may be in information-gathering mode. 30% now fit into the problem-aware bracket. And 60%, as usual, are likely to be unaware.

Of course, no industry is born equal. And I'm sure toilet roll suppliers, for example, have some more positive metrics to look at. But for the sake of this analysis, we're going for averages and sweeping generalisations.

So with 1% or less of your audience in buying mode, how effective do you think it would be to pummel your audience with hard-hitting promotional ads?

Sure, you might still be able to convert that small group of buyers. But you'll be missing the mark with 99% of your audience. And you'll likely end up getting their goat and damaging your brand reputation.

## THE LARGER MARKET FORMULA (IN A CRISIS)



The thing to remember is that, during a crisis, people are uncertain. And uncertainty is not your friend when it comes to conversions.

People don't know what they want or need and this is reflected in the marketing funnel.

You might find a lot more prospects floating around in the problem-aware and information-gathering stages. But they're hesitant to push any further. So they wait. They wait until the crisis is over or they continue to gather information long after they've got everything they need.

Car manufacturer Ford is a pro at weathering a crisis.

They've acknowledged the coronavirus pandemic by pivoting their ads to explain how they've tackled global crises in the past.

During World War II, they used their factories to build military

equipment. During the COVID-19 fight, they're making medical equipment that's in short supply. To communicate this with their audience, they've released two new ads, "Built to Lend a Hand" and "Built for Right Now".

These ads don't sell anything.

Instead, they build awareness for the Ford brand and how it's been helpful in the past. And everyone loves a helpful brand.

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## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

Rather than focusing on "selling stuff" to a group of people who, let's face it, probably aren't going to buy, you need to focus on how prominent your brand's voice is in the market.

Consumers are attracted to brands that emanate strength in difficult times. Confidence and reassurance are vital attributes.

A lot of brands went quiet at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak because they didn't know what to say or how to say it. Or because their go-to reaction in a potential recession is to hit the brakes on marketing spend.

While it's perhaps better to be quiet than saying the wrong thing, it's definitely not advisable.

It may leave your audience wondering what's happening to you. They may think they can't rely on you. Or even that you're in trouble.

But it goes further than that.

There's a ton of evidence (e.g. from IPA research) showing that

brands should maintain their share of voice (SOV) at or above their share of market (SOM) during a downturn. The long-term improvement in profitability is likely to greatly outweigh the short term reduction in marketing spend.

And “long-term” is the key point here.

You might well take a hit during the crisis itself, as most of us will. But now’s an opportunity to build your brand reputation and nurture long-term relationships, so that you come up trumps at the other end.

Brands that have continued to communicate with their audiences throughout the pandemic have remained at the front of their customers’ minds - even if they’re nowhere near ready to buy.

Think about it: if a large percentage of your competitors clam up and don’t say anything, there’s more room for you to jump in and fill the gap with helpful, valuable content.

It gives you a chance to become a trusted thought leader.

And advertising costs will be lower than usual times because of less competition. Meaning: the ROI could be greater.

We liken it to a racetrack. Think of the crisis as a sharp curve on the track.

Most of your competitors will be hitting the brakes on publishing content as they come up to that corner.

But if you control yourself well around the curve, are consistent with your communication, and accelerate at the right time, you can overtake them and come out on top.

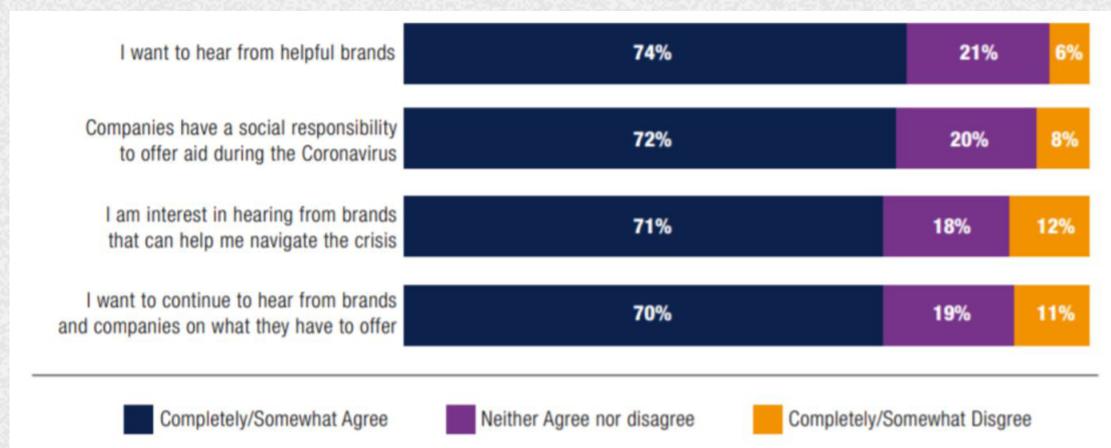
Content marketing is the ideal way to do this.

Creating value-driven content that taps into your audiences' wants and needs, helps build trust, keeps lines of communication open, and positions you as a thought leader in your industry.

While this might not get you a surge in immediate sales during a crisis (which will be very hard to do anyway), it does mean you'll have a bigger audience once it's all over. And you might enjoy an increase then.

Your share of voice should position you as a reliable and stable leader. When people are uncertain, they tend to lean towards brands that offer comfort and emanate strength.

Research from Ipsos shows that over 70% of people want to hear from brands that can help them navigate the crisis. And over 70% also feel that companies have a social responsibility to offer aid during COVID-19.



There's also a phenomenon known as the Mere Exposure Effect, where consumers develop a preference for your products or services simply because they are familiar with you. And publishing great, regular content will put you directly in their eye line to kick this phenomenon into action.

But of course, it's not just about keeping your comms rolling

during a downturn. It's also about making sure you say *the right* things. Especially when the situation is as strange and sensitive as it is right now.



Innocent Smoothies are pros at getting their communication on point and they're absolutely smashing it during the COVID-19 outbreak. This Instagram post offered users 100 things to do - inside - over the Easter weekend.

You'll notice that it's just the right balance between humorous and helpful.

And that's on-brand for Innocent, who are well-known for their cheeky tone of voice.

So... What recipe should you follow to keep your marketing messaging on point?

**02**



# **PART TWO**

**13 RULES FOR COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS**

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# 13 RULES FOR COMMUNICATING IN A CRISIS

Before you dive headfirst into pushing out content, there are some things you should bear in mind. Particularly if you want to avoid any cringeworthy, Finger Lickin' situations.

## **1. Stay in Regular Contact**

Consistency is key during a crisis.

People seek out stable, reliable sources that they can count on in times of need. Make sure your regular contact is extra attentive though. You don't want to bombard people with daily emails that are going to add to their stress and worry.

## **2. Answer Customer and Prospect Questions Without Them Having to Ask**

People are going to have a lot of questions during a crisis.

They become hungrier for information as they try to make sense of what's going on around them. Make it your job to answer questions they might have before they even ask them. This will show them that you completely understand their feelings and needs during a tricky time.

How do you know what those questions are? Talk to a select group of your actual customers to find out. I'll explain how later on.

## **3. Offer Selfless Value**

Sales will plummet during a crisis. It's just a fact.

People tend to put away their wallets when faced with

uncertainty, and it's important that you respect this. Rather than trying to convince people to buy until you're blue in the face, offer selfless value. What do these people need right now? What are they scared of? Serving, not selling, is the best way to be in a crisis.

In the UK, during World War II, Marks & Spencer worked with the government to develop rationed clothing for British citizens. Their brand was known for the war efforts for decades afterwards. Take a leaf out of their book and offer selfless acts of kindness.

#### **4. Be Real, Honest, Authentic, and Empathic**

Your prospects and customers are human.

They're going to be feeling all the feels - more so than usual. If you can show up and be honest and empathic, you're going to build trust. And, when this is all over, they'll remember you as a brand that was real.

#### **5. Avoid Clickbait**

Don't be seen as opportunistic. So many brands have used the coronavirus to try and capture the attention of their audience but this can massively backfire.

I.e. don't write an eBook about solving the COVID-19 crisis.

#### **6. Don't Create Content if it's Not Relevant**

If you've thought about creating something about COVID-19 even though it doesn't really fit with your business, stop. This is verging on clickbait.

#### **7. Avoid Cliches and Corporate Talk**

This should go for any communication, crisis or not. Cliches

make eyes roll and corporate talk will lose your audience in record time. I.e. don't say things like "at Company X, your wellbeing and safety is of utmost importance to us". Be real!

### **8. Don't Add to the Panic**

Some brands have taken it upon themselves to talk non-stop about the pandemic.

Remember, your audience already has enough on their plates without seeing COVID-19 news everywhere they turn. While you shouldn't be adding to the panic with hyperbole articles and constant coronavirus news, you also shouldn't ignore it. Acknowledge there's a pandemic but don't dwell on it.

### **9. Focus on Assurance, Assistance, and Actions**

The three "A"s should drive everything you do.

Reassure your audience that everything is good with you and you're still going strong. Offer them ways that you can help, and give them very specific actions to take.

### **10. Play the Long Game**

Your crisis content strategy shouldn't be a quick fix. Instead, put processes in place that will continue to reap benefits long after everything's back to normal. We're talking about brand-building, SEO and nurturing funnels here.

During a crisis, the buying cycle stretches out for longer than usual. Instead of a five-part email welcome sequence that lasts for two weeks, you might employ a 10-20 part sequence that spans two months or more.

### **11. You Can Still Sell**

Selling seems to be taboo at the moment. But you're a business.

People still need you and what you're offering. People are still spending money, they're just spending less of it and it's taking them longer to make decisions because of the uncertainty. So if you're wondering if you can still sell, the answer is yes - just do it tactfully and empathetically.

Remember the stats from the Ipsos research we shared earlier? 70% of people want to continue hearing from brands and companies on what they have to offer. But they certainly don't want to ONLY hear about that.

## **12. Adapt to New Media Consumption Patterns**

The way people are consuming information right now has shifted. We're in lockdown, or partial lockdown. So people are hanging out on social media a lot more. They're watching TV a lot more. They're actively looking for content to consume. So adapt. Help them out by providing engaging, valuable stuff for them to sink their teeth into.

## **13. Don't Normalise When Restrictions Lift**

It's so important that brands don't all jump on the selling train as soon as restrictions are lifted. Sensitivity is still called for more than ever. Many people will have lost their jobs. Many people will have lost loved ones. And telling these people that your product is just what they need - as soon as we're out of lockdown - is unethical at best.

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# EXAMPLES

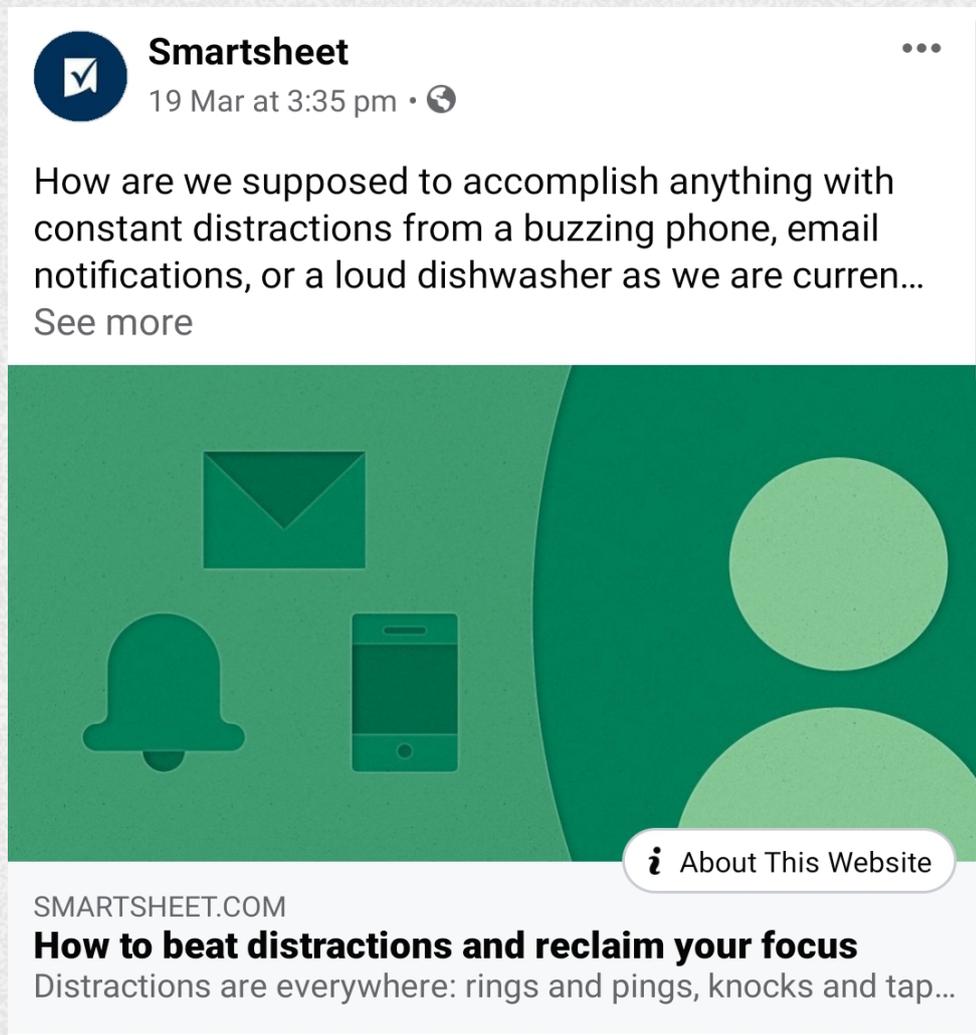
There are some brands out there who have clearly put some thought into their crisis comms and are getting it spot on.

Let's look at some examples.

### 1. Smartsheet

Smartsheet are approaching their comms in a commendable way.

This social post is a shining example of good comms:



They know that their 'working from home' customers may be struggling to concentrate. That's the reality of the situation. It's not easy, even if you do have a peaceful house. There are distractions coming from all angles.

# Enabling your dynamic enterprise

With business conditions changing rapidly, it's never been more critical for organizations to operate with agility and flexibility. Our platform can connect your remote teams and provide a common source of truth to keep your entire organization aligned, adapting, and moving forward through change.

[Get free COVID-19 response resources](#)

[Try Smartsheet for free](#)

And the advice they're offering is very much in line with their usual content marketing buckets; helping solve productivity and efficiency challenges (which is what their tool does, in a nutshell).

Even better than that, they are offering free COVID-19 response resources:

They acknowledge the crisis, without positioning themselves as an expert (why would they? They're not scientists). We know that it's bad taste to sell, so they're concentrating on offering value.

As well as the free resources, they also give the customer the option to try the service for free, which is exactly what they should be doing.

## 2. Nike

It's no surprise that Nike are knocking it out of the park with their crisis comms.



Now more than ever, we are one team. [#playinside](#)  
[#playfortheworld](#)

**IF YOU EVER DREAMED OF PLAYING  
FOR MILLIONS AROUND THE WORLD,  
NOW IS YOUR CHANCE.**

Play inside, play for the world.



132K 3:01 PM - Mar 21, 2020



33.5K people are talking about this



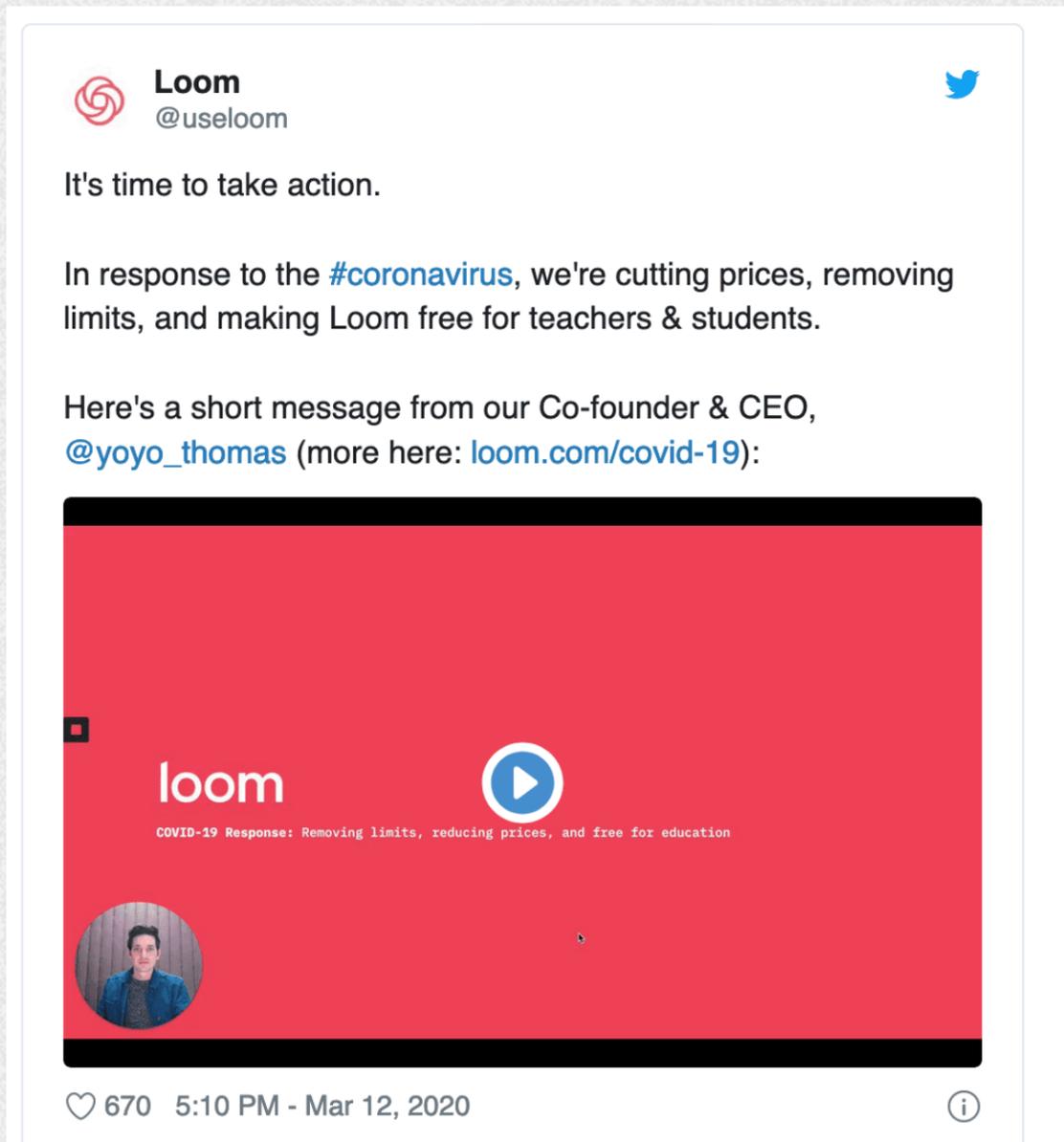
Communications masters, as always, they have made their exercise app free for 90 days.

“Play inside, play for the world.” is just a great tagline. It’s inspiring, making the idea of staying inside suddenly exciting and positioning the customer as the hero/heroine.

They’ve also started a viral sit-up competition and posted plenty of other creative content to help people weather the storm.

### 3. Loom

Screen recording software company, Loom, are offering their software free for teachers and students:



It's powerful because it shows that they are in it with their customers. They want to help out in a time when they're needed most.

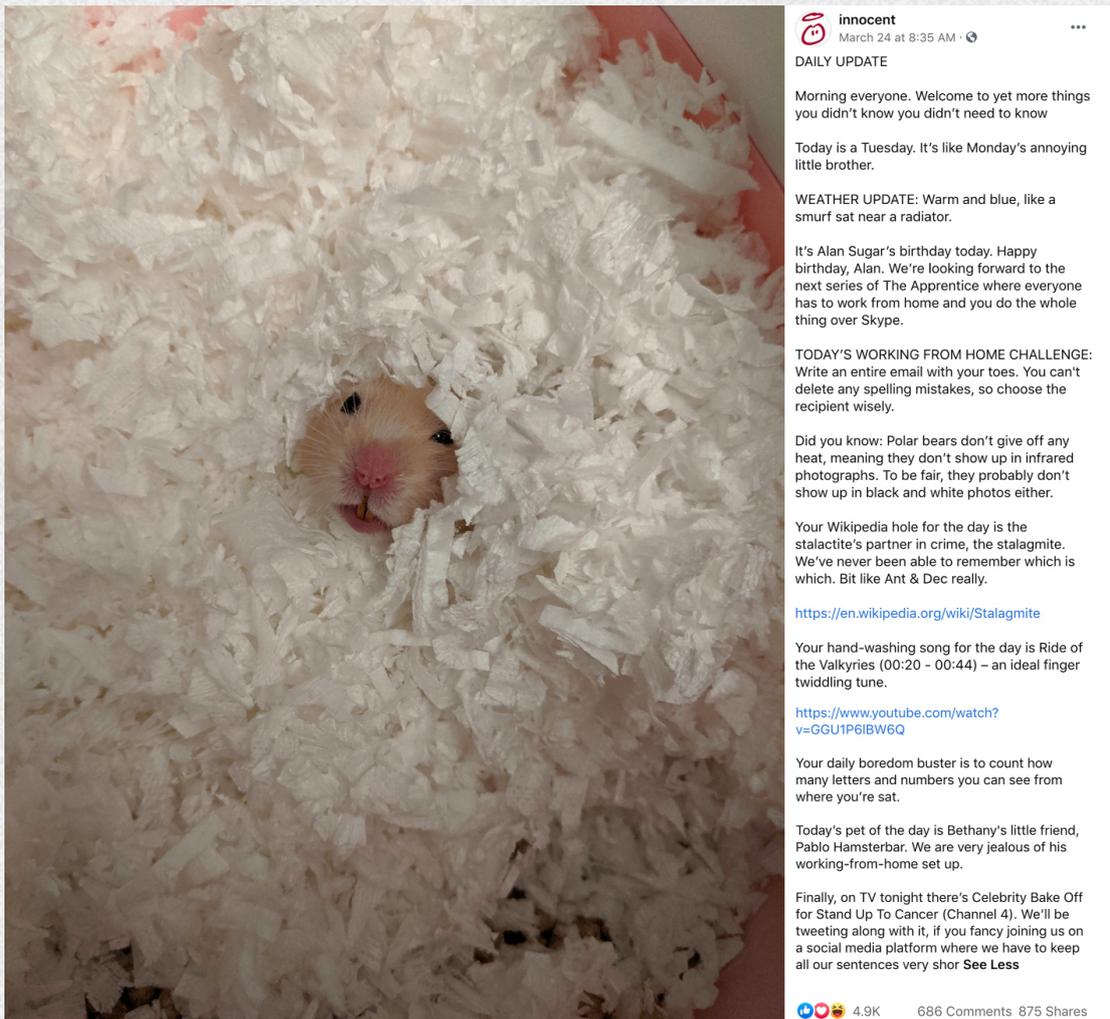
#### 4. Innocent

I know, we're obsessed. But Innocent have always been enviable with their communications and they are bang on with their messaging now.

They know exactly how to connect on a human level with customers, which is exactly what's needed.

Authenticity is key, remember?

Innocent have been posting daily updates, which have absolutely nothing to do with their products - and people have been loving it.



Helpful, entertaining and on-brand. It's offering respite from the doom and gloom, while still alluding to the fact that we're in a crisis. You can't pretend it's not happening, after all.

## 5. Reformation

Sustainable clothing brand, Reformation gets real with their subscribers. They acknowledge the crisis, update customers on

their current situation, but reassure them that they can still shop online. And most admirably, they then ask subscribers what kind of content they want to see.

This is a bold and very clever move. By admitting weakness, you will instantly seem genuine and 'human', which builds trust with your audience.

**Guys,**

By now we are all aware of the severity of COVID-19, and probably exhausted from the anxiety of it all. While we don't want to add to the stress, we do want to let you know how we're dealing with it at Ref.

To make sure we do whatever we can to help contain the virus, we will be closing all of our stores for now. Our retail teams will be given paid time off. All planned events and factory tours have been canceled as well.

As it's a complicated situation, these plans might change, and if so we'll let you know. We are closely monitoring what's going on, and will follow recommendations from the WHO, CDC and NHS.

As always, we're available on the Corona-immune Internet. You can still shop at [thereformation.com](http://thereformation.com), dm us on Instagram, and send any questions or thoughts to [love@thereformation.com](mailto:love@thereformation.com).

Lastly, we're not sure exactly what is appropriate for a company like ours to be talking and posting about right now. What's resonating with you? Do you still want to hear about new collection launches and sustainability related stuff? Or do you need a break? Please let us know.

Stay safe and take care of each other.

♥ Ref

On top of this, they joined forces with The City of LA, and used their factories to make face masks for key workers.



## Let's make masks

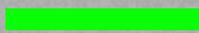
We partnered with the City of LA to make masks in our factory for essential workers who desperately need them.

→ [Learn more](#)

Relatable, helpful and very much on the 'we're in this together' vein. And it's authentic.

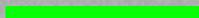
Authentic communications always stand out, because consumers can just tell if a brand is being real or not.

**03**



# **PART THREE**

**MAKING YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY FIT FOR PURPOSE**



# THE MARKETING FUNNEL

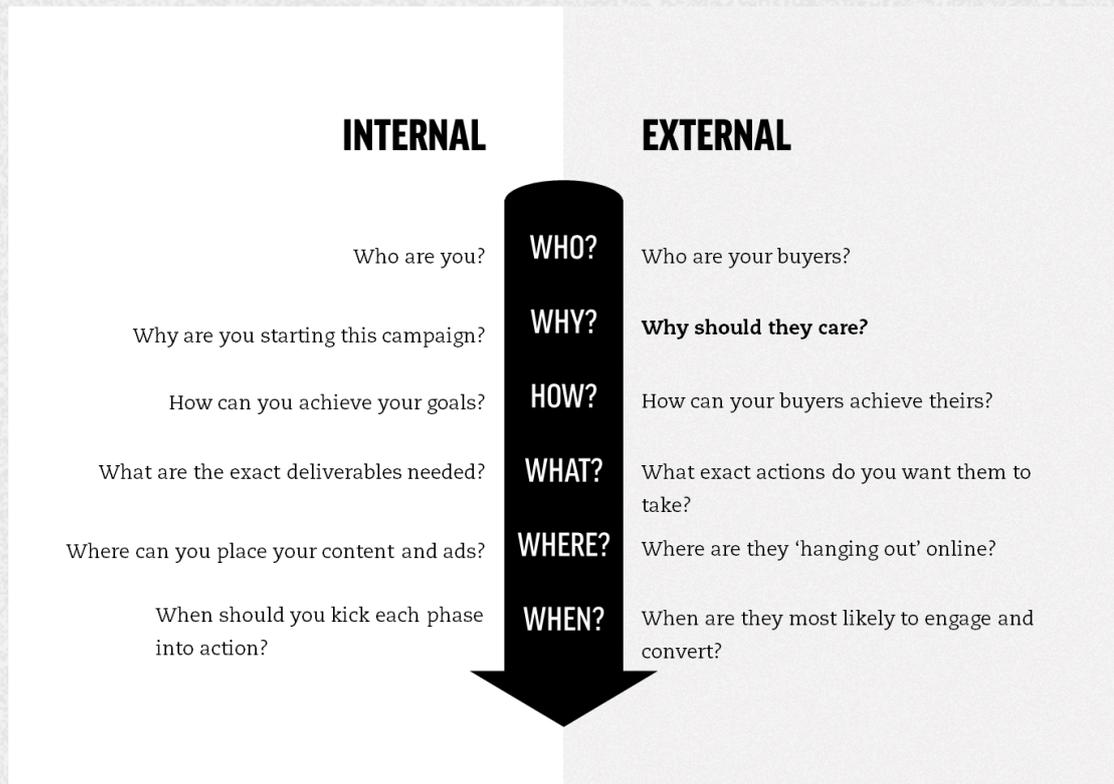
Your strategy is the backbone of your content.

But, like with everything else, it might need a few tweaks during a crisis. We're not saying this is true for every brand - in fact, some brands are doing just fine with their regular content strategy in play.

But it's worth reassessing what your strategy looks like, where any gaps might be, and whether it still ties into the needs of your customers during this difficult time.

The backbone of your strategy has two channels - internal and external, and answers the who, what, why, when, and how of your content:

- Who are you and who are your buyers?
- Why are you running your campaign and why should people care?
- How can you reach your goals and how can you help your customers reach theirs?
- What are the deliverables you need to create and what actions do you want your customers to take?
- Where can you publish your content and where are your audience hanging out online?
- When should you kick off each phase of your strategy and when are people most likely to engage and convert?



You probably have all the answers ready for these during “normal” times, but does any of this change during a crisis? Are your customers still hanging out in the same place? Has what they care about changed?

Take a closer look at your strategy and consider the sensitivities involved right now, the current challenges of your prospects and customers, and the fact that fewer people are in “buying” mode.

And ask yourself these questions:

1. How are your customers currently feeling?
2. What role does your brand usually play in their lives - and how does it fit this crisis situation?
3. How should you market to people who aren’t buying? (Hint: through brand-building and nurturing for long-term benefits).

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR CUSTOMERS

The best way to start any strategy is with customer-focused insights. I.e. what's going on inside your buyers' minds? What are their challenges? What are their desires? What are their triggers? What are their perceived barriers to purchase?

This doesn't change for times of crisis either.

But you'll most likely find that, right now, your customer behaviour and mindset are going to be just a little different to the norm.

Maybe a lot different.

Selling some kind of tool or service that helps with their business challenges? Or a product that makes them look pretty?

Well, right now they have bigger fish to fry. Like the fear of losing their job. Or the stress of working in a house crammed with family members. And the fear of catching you-know-what. Plus the growing cabin fever felt during lockdown.

## HOW TO UNDERSTAND YOUR CUSTOMERS -

- **Talk to them.** It's really that simple. Record interviews with and transcribe them to get VoC (voice of customer data). This allows you to gather the exact words and phrases your customers are using which you can then enrich your copy and content with.
- **Send surveys.** Ask your email list to answer a few questions or, for site browsers who might not yet be customers, create on-site polls. Or just ask them a few questions in an email if you want to keep things light and simple (like Ref did in the

example above).

- **Analyse your analytics** to determine whether your prospects are behaving any differently. What's changed? Understanding this will help you reshape your marketing strategy for the current situation.
- **Check out groups**, forums, and sites like [Quora](#) to dig into the common questions your customers have. We call this "implicit data collection". I.e. you can gather insights from your prospective buyers without actually having them play along (although the best strategy is to do both).

All of this information can be used to create in-depth customer or buyer personas.

These are detailed accounts of who your audience is.

They dig deeper than the usual demographic information, like age and location, and venture into psychographic tendencies and buyer insights.

This includes things like your customers' biggest challenges, their hopes, fears, and dreams, their purchasing triggers, expectations, and their online behaviour.

If you already have a set of buyer personas, they might need tweaking to reflect who your customers are in a crisis. It's likely they'll have new challenges, new pain points, and a fresh set of (very pressing) needs.

E.g. if John Smith is the name of one of your buyer archetypes - add a section to that buyer persona called "John Smith in a crisis".

Abnormal times call for abnormal measures.

The key is to use real quotes from real buyers or have a specific

customer in mind when working through the details.

Interviewing customers is incredibly helpful at this point to determine any new pains and triggers.

Who your customers are and what they want and need will drive your entire strategy - including in a crisis.



## THE CONTENT MARKETING FUNNEL

Crises change the marketing funnel.

What might have once been a punchy funnel geared towards quick conversions and sales is now a lengthy task of nurturing. In most cases, at least.

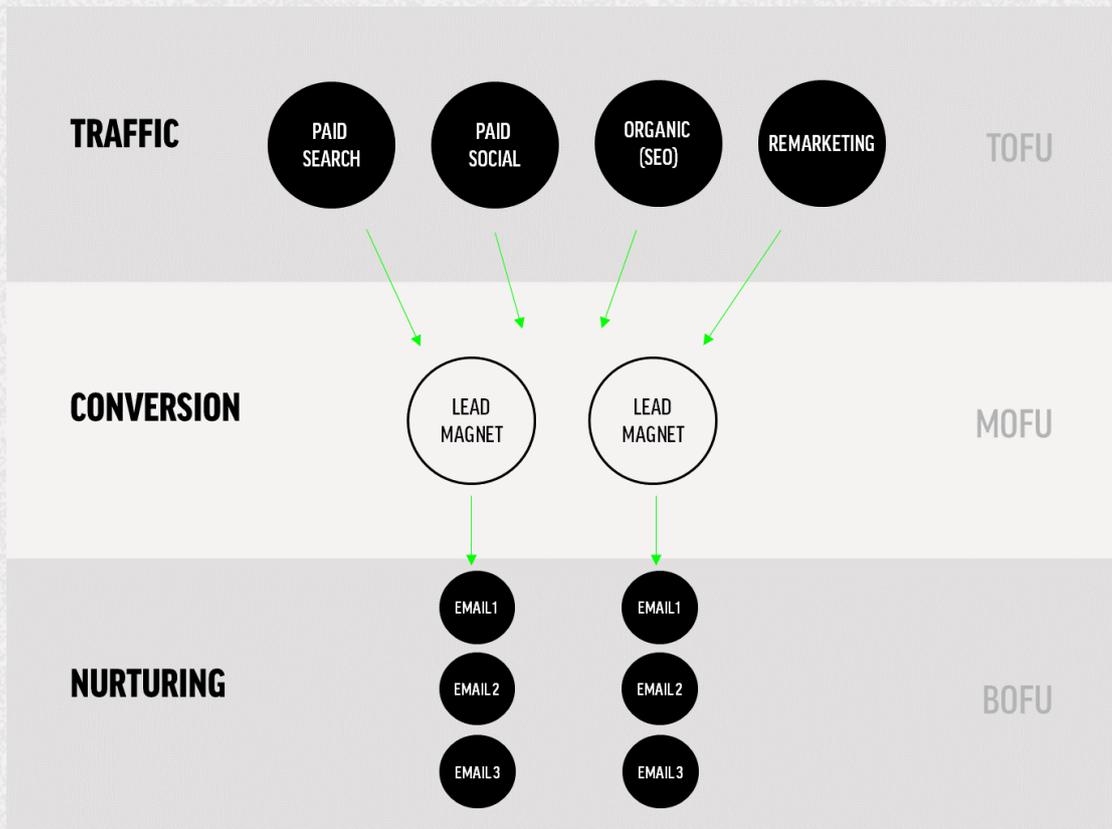
Of course, as I mentioned before, you might be in a sector (like the food industry) which is thriving right now - for which the following won't apply. But that's your judgement call. And: lucky you!

Generally, customers need longer to make decisions, so the funnel might be spread out over three or even six months rather than a couple of weeks.

More importantly, the goal isn't an immediate sale.

Instead, the focus should be on building customer relationships, tackling crisis-related problems, and positioning your brand as a thought leader through valuable, helpful content.

You can do this with a typical content marketing funnel, with just a few tweaks to suit the sensitivity of the times.



There are three distinct stages to the content marketing funnel:

1. TOFU - Top of the Funnel
2. MOFU - Middle of the Funnel
3. BOFU - Bottom of the Funnel

Each of these stages requires a different approach in order to move customers from one to the next.

### Top of the Funnel

The top of the funnel focuses on bringing traffic to your content. There are plenty of ways to do this, including:

- SEO
- Paid search

- Social media ads
- Organic social media marketing
- Remarketing
- Guest posting

This is where it helps to know where your customers are hanging out so you can market to them in the right places.

It's worth thinking about how you present your brand on these channels, too. The way we socialise has completely changed during this crisis, which means throwing out promotional post after promotional post on social media doesn't cut it right now.

One of our big retail clients (not naming names) pushed out some product-focused social messaging recently and got a ton of negative backlash.

They have quickly changed their tune.

So looking after your social community in a crisis is really important - so important, in fact, that we've written a whole blog post about it. [Read it here.](#)

### **Middle of the Funnel**

The middle of the funnel is all about conversion - or, more specifically, growing a list of email subscribers through some kind gated content or asset.

We refer to these as lead magnets. And specifically, if they are content-based, we call them HVCAs (high value content assets).

You likely have a few of these already. They tend to come in the form of downloadable ebooks, webinars, video series, or pretty much anything that's high value and can be downloaded in exchange for a name and email address.

In the B2C world, these might come in the form of a competition or quiz. But again, the goal is to exchange something of value - that your buyers would really really want - for their name and email address.

But during a crisis, you might need to make some changes.

For example, there's a very high chance you'll be creating some crises-related lead magnets that address your customers' current challenges. Or relate to the current situation somehow.

But ONLY if it makes sense for your brand to do so.

You be the judge of that.

**Top tip:** HVCAAs aren't just lead magnets for new customers.

They're also relationship builders for your current clients, so don't forget to send them out to people already on your list. This will solidify your position as an expert and keep you front-of-mind for prospects that might have forgotten about you.

Why's it more important than ever to push people towards an email nurturing funnel?

Well, for one thing, you can't sell as much. So building a list of warm leads is the next best thing. And having someone at the end of an email is much more personal (and yields better results) than just broadcasting to your social media followers.

But also because email open rates are currently increasing by 5-10% every week, which is massive.

Remember - we should be adapting to new media consumption patterns. Here's your chance to do so.

### **Bottom of the Funnel**

The bottom of the funnel is where you might have to make the

most changes during a crisis.

This is where you nurture your leads through valuable email drip sequences that provide continued value and/or entertainment. And, usually, you'll pitch your service or product at some point. Maybe often, if you're in the retail space.

Remember though that there are far less people who are actively buying during a crisis. This means that your drip campaigns might be a lot longer than usual and far less salesy.

Think: value, empathy and tact.

As a rule of thumb (especially in the B2B sphere), a bottom-funnel drip campaign should focus on 75% value and 25% sales. In a crisis like this, however, it may be worth shooting for something more like 90% value and 10% sales.

But the best way to find that perfect mix is - you guessed it - ask your customers!

Your lead nurturing drip sequences are the prime time for relationship-building.

By consistently showing up in your prospects' inboxes, you're confirming your expertise, offering reassurance, and showing that you're there for them in times of need.

You're their helpful, trusted, valuable friend.

Your crisis sequence might be a lot longer than your regular sequence, but it should still have all the parts of a normal email sequence - you might just have to spread it out over a longer period of time and throw in extra quantities of value.

Top tips for your crisis lead nurturing sequence:

- Thank leads for subscribing and outline what they can expect

from your emails

- Empathise with their situation and ask them if there's anything you can do to help
- Tell stories with valuable insights that solve a key challenge (turning case studies into stories is a great way to do this)
- Tell a story that preempts a common perceived barrier
- Empathise with their situation again.
- Tell a story about how you solved a crisis-related challenge for someone like them (use your buyer personas to help you out here), without it sounding like you're promoting yourself (which you are doing, subtly). The focus should be more on "here's how we helped someone like you, which you can now learn from".
- Start with more frequent emails and then space them out over time (think: the Fibonacci sequence). This gets prospects used to opening your emails from the get-go and then gives them some space to breathe. They'll be more likely to open your later one, further along the line.

And when it comes to selling? You still need to make money. And over 70% of people still want to hear about your products and services- which we saw in the Ipsos research earlier.

People are still buying, but their habits have changed.

Instead of pitching a huge, multi-month offer or a big contract at the end of your sequence, sell a minimum viable commitment instead.

This should be something that provides a quick win. It might be a free trial (perhaps a more generous one than usual), a free consultation call, or a heavily discounted "foot in the door" offer

on a product.

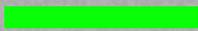
The key here is to make sure that a) this is a product or service that people will actually want right now (E.g. don't try to push holiday packages down their throats). And b) make sure you "sell" super empathetically. Tweak the wording so that it is clear you are emphasising with their current situational and are not ignoring the crisis.

It'll be a delicate balancing act. Give us a shout if you need an extra pair of expert eyes.

**Top tip:** send "by the way" emails to keep in regular contact with your prospects during a crisis. Things like "by the way, I just came across a useful article you'd like" or "check out this funny video about [shared interest] I found/we created".

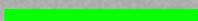
This will keep the connection going but also bring out your human side which will build that all-important trust.

**04**



# **PART FOUR**

**CONTENT CREATION, FOOD FOR THOUGHT**



# REPURPOSING CONTENT

It might look like you need to create a ton of content for each stage of the funnel, but there is one easy way you can make a lot of content from one core theme or piece of content.

We call it 'repurposing'. And it's a powerful, powerful thing.

Gary Vaynerchuk is the king of this (maybe even to an excessive level).

He wrote [this guide](#) to show you how to turn one piece of content into a whopping 64 other pieces. Examples include screenshotting Tweets and turning them into Instagram posts and creating memes out of them.

That article should definitely give you some food for thought.

Your HVCA's are perfect for repurposing.

Usually, they'll be long, juicy pieces of content that are packed full of information and value. From one HVCA alone, you can break it down into several top-funnel pieces like:

- Blog posts
- Video snippets
- Social teasers
- Infographics
- Podcast episodes

And if you're in the B2C sphere - and have created some kind of competition as your lead magnet (like Nike's crunch contest) - there will likely be a ton of user-generated content that you can

then repurpose into different shapes and formats. E.g. Write a blog post about the completion. Or chop up the best bits from the video entries and stitch them together to make a viral video.

For fear of sounding like a huge walking cliché, the possibilities are endless.



## CONTENT BUCKETS FOR EASY CONTENT CREATION

We love a good content bucket.

These are essentially themes that you can file all topics under so you don't spread yourself too thin or focus too much on one thing.

Your content buckets will usually cover three to five common themes that your audience are interested in, and which relate to your offering.

Use your buyer personas here to drill down into key wants and needs.

Think about their new needs in the current crisis, too - what's going to be truly valuable to them right now? What can you help them with?

Using the sample chart (below), you can then start to plot your content pieces - from HVCA's to blog posts, social teasers, and everything in between - under each content bucket and for each persona.

We wouldn't recommend going all out at once and creating

Content Bucket	Buyer 1: Henry	Buyer 2: Barbara	Buyer 3: Gordon
Bucket 1:	QUIZ:	EBOOK:	COMPETITION:
Bucket 2:	VIDEO:	WEBINAR:	WEBINAR:
Bucket 3:	EBOOK:	QUIZ:	REPORT:
Bucket 4:	REPORT:	EBOOK:	INFOGRAPHIC:

HVCAs or lead magnets for every persona in every content bucket. Talk about putting too much on your plate in a difficult time.

Instead, start with one HVCA per buyer persona or one HVCA per content bucket.

This way, you'll have at least one incredibly valuable piece of content that tackles the specific needs of one buyer person or on a specific topic - basically, there will be value for everyone.

And get it out fairly soon, because things are moving quickly, if you hadn't noticed?



# MAKE YOUR CRISIS COMMS CONNECTIVE, NOT CRINGEY

It's difficult to know what to do during a crisis - particularly during something we've never experienced before. We worry about getting it right or, more accurately, we worry about getting it horribly, life-ruiningly wrong.

The thing is, consumers still need to hear from you.

People are still buying. They are still listening to brands and absorbing the value they're throwing out - but you have to be providing value in the first place for it to be absorbed. Don't go quiet.

Times are uncertain and weird, there's no doubt about that. But it's also the perfect time to build real relationships with your customers and serve them better than ever.

And if in the process you can get ahead of your competition and gain a bigger share of voice, then you might be able to flip this troubling situation into a long-term win.

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## GOOD LUCK!

Big thanks to our amazing Google-award-winning PPC partner agency, [Fountain Partnership](#), who did a ton of research alongside us, so that we could create this useful guide for you.

Give us a shout if you want any further tips.

Good luck and stay safe!

**GET IN TOUCH**

