MARKETING TO A VIRTUAL WORLD

TIPS, TECH AND TRENDS FOR A SOCIALLY DISTANT MARKETPLACE

OVERVIEW

The Covid-19 outbreak has many owners and operators of small businesses—not to mention associations and non-profits—expanding their communication online. But what approaches might be right for you? The following piece provides background on webinars, video and premier events, live streaming and podcasts.

For added detail on these and other options, contact the team at TRG Marketing at info@TRG-Marketing.com or 262.786.5970.

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WEBINARS

Webinars have been around for a long time. As always, planning is essential and it is wise to ensure that you are spending as much time on content as logistics.

Choosing the right topic is key. It must fit the audience and address their goals, needs and challenges.

Select a webinar provider that works for you and become familiar with it. Among the platforms that are commonly used are:

- **GoToWebinar**, which is well-established; however, it can be more expensive
- **StartMeeting**, which requires a user to download it first. This tends to be better suited to video meetings than webinars
- **WebEx**, which is similar to GoToWebinar

When choosing a provider, keep mobile in mind. And remember that only 16 percent of B2B consumers prefer live webinars. Many people register for a webinar to get the recorded link and watch it on their own time.

There are many ways to make a webinar great, but among the most important tips are:

- In promotional messaging, make the cost of participation clear.
- Use Bitly or Google to track which promotional tactic works best for your audience (social media, email, etc.).
- Send at least four emails promoting the webinar.
- Note technical specs in the last reminder email. Mention if there is software to download or a microphone required.
- Make it visual (but don't let the presentation be a crutch).
- Deliver what you promised. Education is why people are there (not to be sold to).
- End the webinar with actionable advice. Have a clear call-to-action.
- Provide contact information for all speakers, as well as key contacts.
- Have someone familiar with the platform help manage/be available during the webinar so that the presenters don't get distracted with technical issues.
- Ask attendees for input on the next webinar topic.

VIDEO AND PREMIER EVENTS

One useful way of communicating is through video, which can be engaging and interesting, and allow for the use of visual aids. Pre-recorded video also allows for retakes and post-production, as well as high-quality renders and uploads. This can help create more polished and professional content than a live stream event.

Let's compare and contrast two of the most popular platforms for video sharing:

- **YouTube:** YouTube is great for allowing people to view videos on your channel and leave comments. It can also be used to send a private link to a group of select people so that only they can view a posted video. YouTube is also a live streaming platform, allowing for consistency despite different content delivery systems.

- **Vimeo:** Vimeo is similar to YouTube but tends to be more professional and used more frequently for business than entertainment. Videos uploaded to Vimeo are often higher quality than YouTube; Vimeo has fewer or no ads (depending upon the plan), and they offer superior privacy options. They limit the content that is uploaded and have guidelines for what they allow to be uploaded. Vimeo also can be used to live stream.

One advantage of video is that it can be shared on websites, in emails, and in social media messaging. One very common way of distributing video content is through posting on a social media page. This allows content to be viewed by all of a business' followers.

Another useful way to display video content is to embed it in a website. Many website platforms such as Wix and Wordpress allow you to add video content or link a video from YouTube or Vimeo. Emailing video can also be quite effective for sharing content with people on a mailing list or a group of subscribers.

Premier Events are becoming more popular as they combine elements of pre-recorded video and live streamed events. Here, a video is recorded and edited. Then, at a set date and time, it is played back on a video platform so viewers can watch it air just like a live event. The advantages of this method are that one can create the experience of a live event, but still offer the high-quality production of a pre-recorded video.

LIVE STREAMING

Live streaming has become popular with the launch of streaming platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitch, Vimeo and more. It allows video content to be produced more efficiently without having to take hours to edit a video. There is also a sense of authenticity that live streaming tends to project.

The biggest benefit to live streaming may be found in the sense of community that it cultivates. Content can be viewed that has never been shared before—and might never be shared again (depending on your platform). This is attractive to many. There is also an opportunity for interaction when live streaming.

Live streaming also comes with challenges, for as simple as it is to click on to a livestream it is just as easy to depart. Unlike a pre-recorded video where all viewers start the video from the beginning, a live stream can be entered at any time and you cannot rewind. **An average live stream will have less than 10 percent of its peak audience in from the start so you need to constantly "entertain" throughout the whole stream.** If you're seeking to bring people along on a journey with a defined start, middle and end, a well-produced video might be the way to go.

Here are a few tips that can help you succeed with a live stream event:

- Be careful, as when you go "live" there is no editing.
- Have a detailed plan of what you would like to accomplish in the live stream.
- Promote the live stream; your best viewers will be the ones that watch the stream from start to finish.
- To generate more interest, get the date, time and content subject out to people earlier rather than later.
- As you get closer to the start time add a countdown clock to your website, go live with seven minutes left on the clock, this will give your audience some time to join the stream before the content starts.
- Help new viewers get up to speed, either by verbal recaps or a staff member managing the chat and providing recaps there.
- End the stream with a thank you and call to action, whether that be announcing the next stream time or pointing them in the direction of a place to find more information.

PODCASTS

A podcast is an on-demand radio show that is a typical, easy-to-consume spoken-word interview or host conversation. It's one of many tools in the rapidly-expanding field of content marketing. Anyone can create a podcast; whether or not you should depends upon your business, customers and more.

Common formats for podcasts include a solo monologue, an interview show or multiple hosts on a radio show. Typically, the format is casual and conversational. There are many tools, from Google Hangouts to Skype, that can be used to record a podcast, and some are free.

HOW TO GET STARTED

- **Decide on a theme** – What do you want to teach? What you teach depends on your industry but just about every organization can produce a great podcast based on teaching and providing value.
- **How often should you record a podcast?** – Once a week is best. The key is being consistent. And typically, a podcast isn't launched without multiple podcasts already recorded.
- **What format to follow?** – Common formats for podcasts include: a solo monologue, an interview show or multiple hosts on a radio show. Be sure to keep the format casual and conversational. Nothing is more boring than a dry podcast where the host reads from a script. Keep it natural. No script.

The most important thing you need when starting a podcast is a microphone. While your computer or phone probably comes with a built-in microphone, the audio won't be the highest quality. You'll need a strong external microphone. If desperate, you can use your laptop or iPhone microphone, but it won't be as clear or the professional quality you'd like. If you want to add music and provide some production for your podcast, look to Apple products for help.

For more information on any of these tactics, including the pros and cons of different platforms and a discussion of the hardware requirements, contact any member of the TRG team.

info@trg-marketing.com

262.786.5970