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Jaime Aranda is a Social Media Marketing instructor at the SBDC and a small business owner. He's taken some time to share and offer tips on what business owners can do during this time.

Marketing During COVID-19

What were your plans for your business when the ball dropped this New Year 2020? Were you planning on most people having to work from home? Preparing an emergency savings that could support your business for an unknown amount of time? Most of us will answer no to these questions and now we are all navigating the same new terrain, not literally, but digitally. The past few weeks have been pretty intense and we are faced with a year that twists and turns from one day to the next.

Fast forward to now and the majority of the small businesses are closed, operating from home – like myself, and even some manufacturing completely different products to help our community during this pandemic.

As we are adjusting and operating to push and make numbers, here are 4 things to keep in mind when marketing and selling.

1. Address the Elephant in the Room

Things are far from normal right now. Tone-deaf sales emails and ads won't get prospects' attention. So many businesses, large and small, have closed, adjusted hours, and/or cut expenses to save cash. An email or ad you used in January might seem insensitive or could come off wrong.

Double-check your verbiage, photos, headlines, and subject lines. Not addressing we are all in a strange place and assuming all is normal is not the way to go.

2. Get Creative

I love pizza, always have and probably always will. One of my favorite pizza joints in El Paso, named The Pizza Joint – pun intended, created a "Take and Bake" Kit for two twelve-inch pizzas. If you are a restaurant owner, creating kits for customers can be a fun way to bring in new customers and reengage past customers while keeping cash flowing. How can you repackage your products or services?

3. Take advantage of Digital, NOW

"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."

If you don't have a website, take your business online. If you have the budget, hire a developer and if you don't, there are plenty of free or affordable website builders. WIX, SquareSpace and GoDaddy are some top picks for a low budget. Create an online store or offer payments online to keep the money coming in.

4. Give

Give information, give something for free, or give what you can. Start your YouTube channel giving out your wealth of knowledge, start your business blog or give away a service that will help others if you can. Content marketing will keep you top of mind and build trust when people are ready to buy. It'll also make you feel good and hopefully earn you some good karma points.

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Speaking of giving, I started a Facebook Group so El Paso business owners can post their businesses, hours, deals etc. and we can support one and other. I'm hoping to give the community a space to promote and help each other during this time.

If you would like to join, follow this link and request to join the group. I approve requests within a few hours.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2089506177963680/>

Right now, we all need each other more than ever. Reach out to old contacts, reach out to friends, reach out to past clients and reach out to current clients. A phone call may bring in some new business or simply brighten your day.

Stay healthy, safe and positive.