



Members Helping Members

Marketing Counsel During Uncertain Times

PMA asked our marketing agency members for advice as we all grapple with the shifting sands of COVID-19. In addition to the information here, let's continue the conversation at Fresh Ideas: PMA Produce and Floral Marketing Professionals on Linked In.

→ Find us here: www.linkedin.com/groups/8741811/

Thanks to our contributors who took time out to offer their thoughts to our PMA marketing community. We count on them for thoughtful, relevant advice even as they are also coping with these turbulent times. As one of our contributors said:

"Truly this is a time of crisis no one has lived through before. Everything is hard, but together I'm sure we'll stand."

**Innovation.
Resilience.
Communications.**

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Communications/Brand Management

Keep an open communication channel with your clients/customers. There is a lot of information – true and false – out there and they need to hear it directly from you. Let them know that you are working, what you are doing to cover the demand and keep the supply flowing. Use email, text messages, and your social media platforms to keep them aware of everything you're doing. – **Monica Moreno Arellano**

This is a time when a brand needs to remain authentic - and while our industry is part of what will keep food on the plates of people everywhere, now is a time to be sincere and sensitive. Take the time to break down possible reactions to any marketing message you put out there right now. – **Julie Lucido**

Now more than ever is the time to be authentic, transparent and empathetic. Don't appear to be capitalizing on a tragedy. Take steps to reassure clients and consumers about your safety measures and explain any changes to ordering or your business processes. Make yourself and your team available to your clients and offer to help in any way you can. – **Karen Nardozza**

Sharpen your digital assets. One month from now, we will know the impact that staying at home during a pandemic will have on our digital marketing assets on a macro level. With people spending more time on the Internet, traveling less and craving connectivity outside of the home, you may see a significant elevation in website traffic and social media engagement for your brand/company. – **Mackenzie Wortham**

Employ a helpful email strategy. If ever there was a time to communicate virtually, the time is now. Stay ahead of your customer's problems and offer solutions with an email marketing strategy. Consider solutions that your customers may be seeking, empathize and offer realistic solutions to their challenges. – **Mackenzie Wortham**

Maintain focus on your company's brand strategy, voice and message and be patient. As Coronavirus fatigue sets in, your message, and interest in your message, will rise to the surface. Moreover your company's image will remain solid and intact. – **Steven Muro**

With news rapidly changing, a brand/company must decide if they need to be a part of the story in the immediate or if it is time to take a pause. Evaluate any messaging that might appear insensitive to different parts of the country or world particularly on social media channels. Focus on quality not quantity - what do customers/consumers need to know as far as continuing to do business with you? – **Julie Lucido**

Kudos to the brands that have invested in creating trusted relationships with shoppers. These brands can be a true source of information and inspiration online when people need it most. Those relationships could be at risk if they are focused on "selling" versus being helpful as they navigate the unknown. This is true for our communications with consumers and the trade. – **Dan'l Mackey Almy**

Be prepared to update as news breaks. – **Julie Lucido**

As in other crises, first stay calm and prioritize: What matters most to your audience at this time of uncertainty? During China's quarantine time online sales rose 20%, according to The Wall Street Journal, so focus energies on digital platforms and how you can relate a more cause-oriented narrative versus traditional messaging. Shift your energies from offline to targeted or personalized online advertising since consumers are relying on digital media in times of crisis. – **Tristan Simpson**

Get comfortable with video – Face-to-face communication will become less of the norm in the coming months. Encourage your C-suite to get comfortable communicating via video. Digital face-to-face can be as effective as the real thing. There could be questions about whether or not our fresh food is available. Use video to show shoppers that your fields are plentiful and ready to pick and ship. – **Mackenzie Wortham**

Make sure you have a letter or statement from the CEO/Owner to respond to requests on what you are doing as a company to ensure safety to the consumer that is still shopping for their family meals. Make sure your social media communication is relevant and helpful to your audience. – **Cindy Jewell**

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Marketers are the look-outs, the storytellers and the motivators. These core functions don't change, but in unprecedented times, our perspective on how we activate them does. Go to helicopter view. Observe what your company is doing, look for the good, identify the story. Tell the story. Stories are a great way to connect, whether you are telling the story internally to your

teams or using the story as part of comms to customers. Share good news. Cheerlead. Yes, cheerlead (and besides, cheer is trending now!). Right now, people need 'glass half full types' to counter the negativity. Yes, times are challenging, but they will pass. Seek the positive, spread good vibes in all that you do and share. – **Lisa Cork**

Edutainment and New Opportunities to Connect

With so many families quarantined at home, this is a great time to be creating and sharing content, not about coronavirus, and not just another social post, but education. Symphonies do online concerts, education companies roll out free lesson plans for parents, museums do virtual tours and more. We can do the same: Live field tours, healthy eating lesson plans, how to cut a pomegranate, how to supreme a grapefruit, cooking lessons and more. Make yourself valuable to your audience and find new followers. – **Melinda Goodman**

There is positive sentiment for brands that are sharing helpful, relevant information during this time. Food storage tips to ideas for cooking at home, people welcome brand participation in their feeds if it adds value to their current situation. While pantries are being stocked with staples, the cooking culture is on the rise and ever more needed. Fresh, good-for-you foods will resurface on shopping lists as we pass through these initial days of this crisis. – **Dan'l Mackey Almy**

It's a great time to be sharing how to freeze, pickle and can fresh produce: Remind consumers that fresh is good for them, but it doesn't need to go to waste. Farmers are also small businesses that need help during this time. Keep buying fresh produce - plus it's good for everyone. – **Melinda Goodman**

Help customers use fresh produce. As demand grows for canned and frozen foods, educate consumers on how to make best use of fresh produce. Share tips on properly storing fruit and vegetables for longer shelf life, or post best practices for freezing or canning fresh produce for later use. – **Mark Gale**

Connect with your networks. While you may feel concerned customers are busy, they are likely feeling isolated. A few words from you, asking about them and their business, is a good way to maintain relationships during this trying time. – **Lisa Cork**

Innovation

Question: "How do I get my people to innovate?" Answer: "When there's passion or panic." We are definitely in a panic situation right now. Companies have come up with great ideas to survive; restaurants that need to close down have started delivering and developing concepts such as breakfast boxes or cool affordable dinner meals. Also schools are developing online teaching programmes for kids to stay on track and make the best of their "stay at home" situation. What can you do? – **Elena Ozeritskaya**

It's a good time for some reflection on your business, company, role and personal life. Sometimes life feels like a treadmill and you just keep on going until everything stands still for a while, so use

the time to rethink what you're doing and how you're doing it. – **Elena Ozeritskaya**

Rethink packaging. The food industry has been moving toward less packaging, but now might be the time to add packaging to the produce department. Although there is no evidence that COVID-19 is foodborne, customers might feel more secure with an added layer of protection for their food. – **Mark Gale**

Got a way to go direct to consumer (DTC)? Give it a try. If you have shelf stable products, consider existing online services or adding an online store to your website. If farm to home delivery is another option – either partner with an existing company or team up with other growers in your area. – **Karen Nardoza**



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The Coronavirus crisis will mark a before and after in the way businesses have been approaching consumers in a wide range of industries worldwide. Open new doors for reaching consumers. Livestreaming from the orchard; launching of a new variety; communicating nutritional benefits or five new ways to prepare a particular item. Additional to at-home delivery or click-and-collect services, our products are perishable and have a defined life-span. Providing replenishment options and geotargeted deliveries to end-users can provide an additional value to our product. The produce industry is the champion for a healthy life and one constraint for consumers has been time. Now we have time to share daily menus, suggest activities to do at home and guide them through DIY sensorial experiences exploring new flavors and ideas. In the end, we may end up with new consumers, new uses we hadn't thought of and most importantly, new opportunities. We will get through this together, staying safe and alert. – **Ines Masallach**

La Crisis del Coronavirus marcará un antes y un después para las compañías en la manera como se han acercado al consumidor. Leyendo sobre cómo escuelas, museos y artistas se han adaptado a esta situación, veo tres puntos de acción donde podemos abrir nuevas puertas para llegar a los consumidores: 1. Educación: Videos en vivo desde el campo, el lanzamiento de una nueva variedad, comunicar beneficios nutrimentales o 5 nuevas formas

de preparar un producto en particular. 2 Logística: Además de la entrega en casa o recolección en tienda, nuestros productos son perecederos con un tiempo de vida definido. Brindar opciones de resurtido o geolocalizadas para los consumidores finales puede agregar más valor a nuestro producto. Y 3. Bienestar: La industria de productos frescos es la campeona para obtener una vida saludable y un reto que los consumidores tienen ha sido el tiempo. Ahora tenemos el tiempo para compartir menús diarios, sugerir actividades para hacer en casa y hasta guiarlos con una experiencia sensorial “Hágalo usted mismo” explorando nuevos sabores e ideas. Al final, podríamos terminar con nuevos consumidores, nuevos usos que no habíamos pensado antes y lo más importante, nuevas oportunidades. Superaremos esto juntos, estando seguros y alertas. – **Ines Masallach**

In these uncharted waters creativity requires innovative thinking. We already observe significant shifts in consumer behaviour, media consumption, consumer landscape and brands need to respond. Marketing in this time means taking a leadership approach to give confidence in uneasy times. Op-eds, digital content, dedicated webinars, thought leadership pieces all provide our industry with new solutions for changing times. Social distancing or even quarantine doesn't have to mean disconnecting as humans. In this time our purpose as a business: creativity that elevates. – **Rori Setlogelo**

Your Business, Yourself

Stay safe! Our industry has to keep working, the world really depends on us. We know field workers, retail workers as well as shippers and packers need to keep working and keep getting the food to our consumers, but follow the safety and sanitary measures given by the authorities. – **Monica Moreno Arellano**

For many companies, the supply chain may be the largest liability and source of risk. Do you know your supply chain's protocols regarding COVID-19? How does that impact your product and service offerings? What will you do if they have a problem with an outbreak? – **Mark Gale**

Consider your company's role in your customers' supply chains. Do you have preventive policies in place and talking points

should a problem arise? Have you done scenario planning to vet your exposure and response? – **Mark Gale**

Keep your team informed! They are your voice and you need to give them confidence and help them feel safe. Keep your team aware of any measures you are taking, any changes in their work schedule, and how working from home or at the office will affect your business/their work. – **Monica Moreno Arellano**

It's critical to communicate to employees regularly. They are worried and have lots of questions—Is it safe to be here? Can I work remotely? What are travel restrictions? Is my job in danger? Will I get paid if we have to shut down a facility, an event or my office? – **Mark Gale**



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When you are remote, pay specific attention to maintaining culture. Open social channels to share photos of home offices, promote casual chatter among staff members, hold a virtual happy hour or maybe even log on currently to the same lunch-time Yoga class. – **Mark Gale**

Use fresh eyes. Review your marketing materials, advertising, social posts and website with an eye on the current environment, especially any materials developed before the COVID-19 crisis. Make sure messages are still timely and/or won't be misinterpreted. A TV commercial that aired within the past week focused on many people shaking hands with each other, which seemed out of touch with current reality. – **Mark Gale**

Is your crisis plan up to date—vulnerabilities, policies, spokespersons, talking points, FAQs? – **Mark Gale**

Support sales without sales calling. Many companies have halted or severely restricted face-to-face meetings, including sales calls. Trade shows are history, too. Help your sales team and brokers find new ways to communicate. Facilitate webinars, email marketing, Facebook Live and other tools to help connect reps with customers. – **Mark Gale**

Prepare for the “Next”

Start on a back-to-normal plan. No one knows how long this current situation will last but we're certain it won't last forever. Start thinking about the steps you'll need to take to return operations to normal. If you decided to close a facility, how and when will you re-open? Who will be notified, when and how? And what are your procedures to ensure a safe workplace upon re-opening? – **Mark Gale**

Stay connected to your associations that are providing regular resources and updates that can be very helpful in ensuring you are following proper protocols. Get the help you need for your companies who are looking for meaningful things to do. – **Cindy Jewell**

Don't attempt to profit off of the tragedy of the Corona virus. – **Steven Muro**

Times of great challenges offer great opportunities, to stand up, be united, and be diligent. Be vigilant in social distancing where possible to flatten the disease curve. Be strong in positive proactive prevention. Be proud as a unified industry protecting our communities, employees, partners, and consumers in feeding the world. In the end this will make us stronger, with greater appreciation of what we have, what we do, and in short, who we are. – **Doug Kling**

Keep a positive mindset. – **Elena Ozeritskaya**

If you have some breathing room, now is a good opportunity to focus on those important projects that have been delayed because of more urgent priorities. Develop that marketing plan you've been discussing for months. Schedule a quality photo shoot session. Put a social media or thought leadership strategy in place. – **Karen Nardoza**

Don't panic or make drastic decisions because this is an ever-changing environment. It is going to require calm and thoughtful decisions that will have long-lasting benefit. – **Cindy Jewell**