

# Recession-Proof Your Marketing & Sales Strategy



I think we can all agree that for a period the world-wide economy is going to be in recession. I guess we cannot fully predict how long the bounce back will take and I am sure this will vary from country to country and sector to sector.

The challenges that your business was solving a few weeks ago before COVID-19 may look nothing like the challenges you are solving today. In all cases, your sales and marketing strategy will need to shift during this time and if that wasn't enough to ask, you must shift it quickly. Agility will be the name of the game.

A new acronym has entered our vocabulary; "TNN" means The New Normal and with this in mind it's pretty obvious that in some way our customers' buying habits will change. Therefore, the way we reach those customers and connect with them will also have to change.

To draw on an analogy, as the housing market can shift from a buyer's market to a seller's market, your sales and marketing strategy is experiencing a major shift at this time.

## The shift from traditional selling . . . . . . to unconventional serving

In our industry I can foresee we need to move from **traditional selling to unconventional serving**. Fostering relationships and providing value to your existing and prospective customers matter the most during these times.

In fact, you could say **it's all that really matters**. These moments in time have the ability to make or break your reputation.

We are in some historically unpredictable times with no defined timetable. The rules change every day as new information emerges, so you also have to be swift on your feet and act quickly to focus on serving the challenges you are still learning about.

This is a tricky time for so many businesses. We all need to "Level Up" but you need to do it thoughtfully.

We recently went through a full-scale business review called "Accord 2.0 – A Launch Pad For Success". The timing of this turned out to be very fortuitous as we were taking a deep look at what

we do and how we do just at the right moment. Here's an inside look at our own internal planning framework as it may be useful for your business too:

## The 5 key building blocks of a sales and marketing strategy

The most successful sales and marketing strategies contain **5 core elements**.

### 1) Target Marketing



*Customer dynamics change, especially amidst a worldwide crisis, and without proper feedback loops, you could miss out on important shifts and needs of your customers.*

- Do you know what your customers challenges and issues are?
- Who needs your help more than ever right now?
- Why do they need it? What can't they do without you?
- How can you reinvent serving your customers' needs today and going forward?

If you are still trying to serve the pains of yesterday, before COVID-19, then I would suggest you stop bombarding your customers and wasting your money and resources on efforts that will not boost your reputation. If you haven't adjusted your strategy, do that immediately.

### 2) Value Proposition and Messaging

*Great brands understand how to strike the balance of understanding customer needs with empathy. And that perfect balance shines through in everything they do and say.*

- When relationships are key to your business, you must lead with trust.
- Companies doing more of the same will fail.
- Learn how to build trust as a partner by adding value and helping solve pains.
- Be honest with your community and know that it's OK to not have all the answers.

Think of one large brand at the forefront right now. Their iconic branding and messaging are clearly defined, consistently presented, and intelligently refreshed during this time.

### 3) Content Marketing

*The number one rule here is that when you create content, you create it to serve and add some value to your customer*



- Your customers' problems are different, do you know what they are?
- What problems are they trying to solve?
- What are you in a unique position to do to make their life easier right now?
- What is complicating their life right now and keeping them from moving forward?

Content is the key to building trust through value. Content can come in many forms so you need to be thinking outside of the box right now. Some ideas that you can use are:

- Free Checklists
- Webinars
- QAs Sessions
- FAQs
- Community forums
- Connections to help
- Virtual Meetups
- Action Plans
- Curated Information
- Advisory Calls
- Strategy Sessions
- Articles and Blogs

If you have some other innovative ideas, I'd love to hear them. You can do this by emailing me - ([smasters@accord-consulting.com](mailto:smasters@accord-consulting.com)).

### 4) Sales and Marketing Alignment

*The balance of how sales and marketing work together can vary by industry and size of company. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but if you aren't revisiting your sales and marketing strategy right now, I think you are doing yourself a huge disservice. They are both important, but their jobs should be shifting to serve the customer today.*

- Help, don't sell.
- Solve their challenges today.
- Thoughtfully consider the best ways to communicate with them now.
- Execution and alignment between sales and marketing are crucial right now.
- Striking the right balance of human and personal connection is key and can make or break your brand.

The Sales teams are often the closest to the customer and therefore have a better understanding of the challenges they face. Marketing should be working in partnership with sales to deliver tools and content to help sales do their jobs.

This is a time to deepen relationships. There has never been a more critical time to ensure marketing and sales are aligned and working together for the greater good.

## 5) Integrated Campaign and Planning

*Campaign planning is where the building blocks all come together to guide your planning.*

- How do we share this in the most effective way?
- Where is our audience consuming information right now?
- What channels will be most effective for which messages?
- What will our audience appreciate the most during this time?

This is also where the art of marketing comes into play and you need to think outside of the box. New solutions to new challenges. Be bold in your thinking:

- Can you offer smaller services that are more agile and better value for money?
- Can you offer complimentary services?
- What Tools can you offer to help them?
- Foster online communities to help like-minded people share ideas

You're now clear on your core target customer, you understand the new value you can offer at this time, you create the tools and resources they need right now, you deliver it in an integrated way through personal and digital channels, and make sure your sales team and marketing teams are speaking and working in lock step at all times. Simple right? Definitely not, but if you collaborate as a team and use the resources you have in a clever way then you will get there!

## The Bottom Line: The Future is bright . . . how bright and over what time remains to be seen!

Business will resume. When it does, we can't be sure what it will look like. Budgets may be stalled, indefinitely, but not forever. Tomorrow will be different, that we know for sure. Ask yourself how you should be embracing these new opportunities to meet your customers' challenges. Now more than ever, your customers, regardless of who they are, are struggling. Meet them where they are. **Know them. Understand them. Serve them.**

Right now, as a leader, your customers' challenges should be at the forefront of your mind. Your messaging at this time will make or break your sympathetic voice.