



Retail & Restaurant

Reopening

Marketing Plan



Retail & Restaurant Reopening Marketing Plan

You're tired, you're nearly broke, you're frustrated, and you have a business that's been flat-lined for months and now you need to breathe life back into it.

Whether you're a restaurant, boutique, beautician, barber, nail salon, antique store or any other retailer who needs to jumpstart your flow of customers, this marketing plan is for you.

While you decipher new rules to re-open within the government regulations that are limiting your hours and sales and customers, I've put together a blueprint to help restart your marketing.

It's clear that most retailers will have to ramp back up to recover from the cash flow loss before you can make large investments in marketing. So this marketing blueprint will start with low-cost or no-cost marketing techniques, and then will ramp up to options that require an investment.

Notify Current Customers

Start by spreading the word among those who already love you.

- **Email Blast** – Use your customer email list to send a blast announcing your reopening day and times, as well as any specific information they need to know. How will they social distance at your business? Is an appointment necessary? Have your hours been shortened. Can you only accommodate a specific number of customers at a time?
- **Text Messages** – If you have the ability to send texts or push alerts to your customers, be sure to send them notice that you are back and better than ever, ready to see them again. Emails are good, but texts are immediate. Everyone reads their texts, usually the moment they pop up on their phones.
- **Personal Phone Calls** – Take the time to personally call your customers. If you have too many to call, create a list of your top 'raving fan' customers and give each of them a call. Not only will they appreciate the fact that you're reaching out to them personally, they will tell all their friends and become active word-of-mouth marketers for you. Divide the list among your employees so the calls aren't a burden for you.

Look “OPEN”

Don't make customers guess whether you're open or not when they drive by. Do everything you can to look like you are open.

- **Window Signage** – Let's start with the 'Open' sign. Get rid of the paper sign and spring for an electric-plug in sign. Costco has LED open signs for \$92. Hang it at the top of a window so it can be seen over cars and people walking by. The fact that it is illuminated will shine the open message brightly, especially at dusk, at night or on rainy days when everything is dark to begin with.
- **A-Frame Sign** – A simple A-frame sign set along the nearest road will be seen by all the people driving past your place every day. Even if it's just your logo and 'Now Open', that's all the message that you are trying to get across. Don't fill it with a bunch of small words that can't be read in the 3 seconds driver have as they pass.
- **Exterior Banner** – Do you have exterior space where you can hang a banner? In many cities you may be required to get a permit that allows you to have it up for a month or two. If you are a restaurant, check with your beverage distributors because at times the soft drink or beer companies will provide banners for free. If you don't have space on your building, there's also banner hangers for telephone poles, or find a nearby property owner who work out a deal to hang your banner on their fence. With your 'now open' or 'grand reopening' message, you can also add a community support message thanking community heroes, medical workers or first responders.
- **Visibility Gimmicks** – There are a variety of other ways to grab attention at your location. The '**Feather**' signs are vertical banners on a pole that gets pushed into the ground (or a stand). You can order custom printed ones or generic off-the-shelf ones to be attention-getters.

Depending on your business and location, think about using a **wind-dancer**. These are the dancing nylon people that are usually seen at car dealers. The next step up is a cold air balloon that gets inflated and put on your roof to be seen from afar.

And don't forget about the classic **Sign Waver**. They're often used when a business is closing, but you can also use them to show that your business has reopened. Get a sign produced, hire your neighbor's teenager, and have them stand on the sidewalk to wave their sign at passing traffic!

- **Improve Lighting** – If your business looks dark when you drive by, it will look closed to a lot of people. Install brighter lightbulbs or additional lighting to make it a bright, inviting location to visit. This applies to interior lighting and the lighting in your parking lot.

Social Media Networking

Post on all your social media accounts to let your followers know that you have reopened. This is also a great place to educate people on any requirements or new instructions they need to follow – like whether masks are required, or if they need to stand in line for entrance due to limited occupancy requirements.

- **Facebook** – Post on Facebook, but also **keep posting on Facebook**. With their current algorithm, Facebook only shows your posts to around 10% of your followers, so get creative on how you're saying it, but keep saying it with daily posts.

Your **Facebook header graphic** is also a good billboard. Update that – perhaps a photo of you or all the staff wearing a mask! Also update the 'About' information to have current operating hours.

If you belong to any **Facebook groups** – perhaps groups targeted at residents of your community – post your 'open for business' message in the group as well. Groups do a much better job of delivering every message to all group members.

Facebook Live is also a great way to views. Facebook does share video and live feeds with a much larger audience so this is a great tool to use. The content doesn't have to be some amazing scripted feature film. Just go live, show customers what's happening in your location today, chose an item to feature and talk about that – whether it's a main course if you're a restaurant, or a wool sweater if you're a clothing store. Start doing these Facebook Live videos every day to keep your visibility high.

- **Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn** – If you have a following on any other social platforms, use them as well to get your message out to your customers and the community. Follow the Facebook advice to do similar things. You can post videos on Instagram through stories or Instagram TV. You can target business people best through LinkedIn. Use the strengths of the platforms to reach the different segments of your customer base.

- **YouTube** – The iPhone in your pocket has everything you need to create videos you can post on YouTube. It’s the second largest search engine and is actually owned by the first largest search engine – Google – so there’s lots of benefits to posting a series of videos on YouTube.

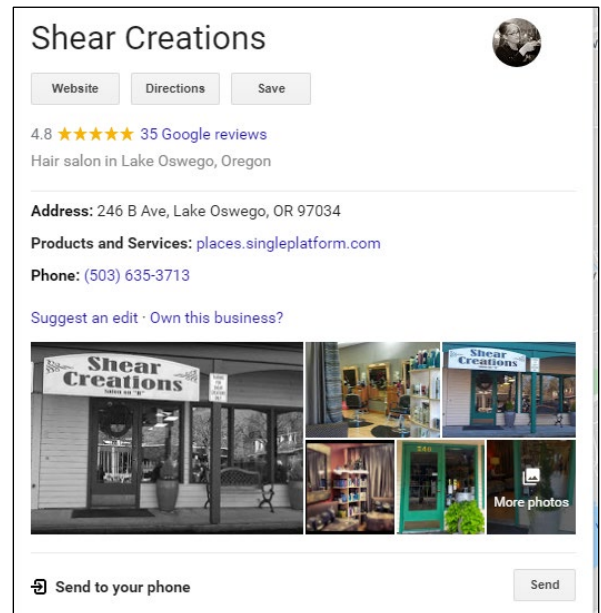
Update Web Presence

The first place people go to learn your business’s status is online. Take a little time to make sure you are being presented properly with current information.

- **Your Website** – Update the homepage of your website with the latest information – ‘We’re Open’ – plus any details your customers need to know.
- **Google My Business** – **This is probably the most important thing you can do!** Google My Business is where you control the information Google displays on search results and Google maps when people search for your business. By completing your GMB listing properly, it will do far more for you than just display your hours. It can also help improve your rankings in Google searches.

Here’s how you control your ‘Google My Business’ listing:

1. Go to Google and search for your business by name, city and state.
2. A ‘knowledge panel’ should appear like the one on the right...
3. If your business does not appear, go to <https://google.com/business/> to create a listing for your business.
4. If you have not claimed your business listing, it will have the “Own this business?” text like this example does. Click on this to take ownership so you can make changes.
5. If you already have access, sign into your account.
6. Optimize your account by doing the following...
 - a. Update your business hours
 - b. Add your Website URL
 - c. Add your Phone Numbers



- d. Add an Appointment URL if you have a contact page or a reservation system
 - e. Restaurants can link to their menus, or add your menu to the GMB listing
 - f. Service businesses can add their services
 - g. Retail-oriented businesses can add lists of products
 - h. Under the 'INFO' section you can add business attributes, like 'restroom', 'women-owned', 'outdoor seating', 'wheelchair accessible', etc.
 - i. Add Business Description – this open text area (750 characters) allows you to tell customers about your business. This text appears on desktop and mobile search, but not on Google maps.
 - j. ADD PHOTOS: Be sure to add photos, videos and/or virtual tours. Google says that businesses with photos receive 42% more request for driving directions!
 - i. LOGO – Upload your logo in a square format. Use a photo editing tool to add a white background and crop so your logo is square.
 - ii. COVER PHOTO – This should be the prime photo you want to use to represent your photo.
 - iii. OTHER PHOTOS – Google has categories they ask for, such as exterior/interior photos, photos at work, team photos, etc. The more you add, the more complete your GMB listing will be.
- **Bing and YELP** – Just like Google My Business, these are two more places you need to keep your business information updated. To access your listing on Bing, go to **bingplaces.com**. To update your listing on Yelp, go to **biz.yelp.com**.
 - **Other Directories** – It's also wise to check out your other listings around the web. An easy way to do this is to visit a site that provides tools and information for Search Engine Optimization (SEO). They have a free tool where you can put in your company to see how well your site is doing for local listings. Visit the page at <https://moz.com/checkout/local/check> and put in your company name and address. This will give you a look at your online business listing visibility.

Alert Local Media

Don't overlook a little public relations. Some free media coverage can reach a large segment of your audience without paying to advertise.

- **Refine Your Story** – Your local media is always looking for good stories to fill their news and entertainment hours, but the key is that you need to hook them with a story that

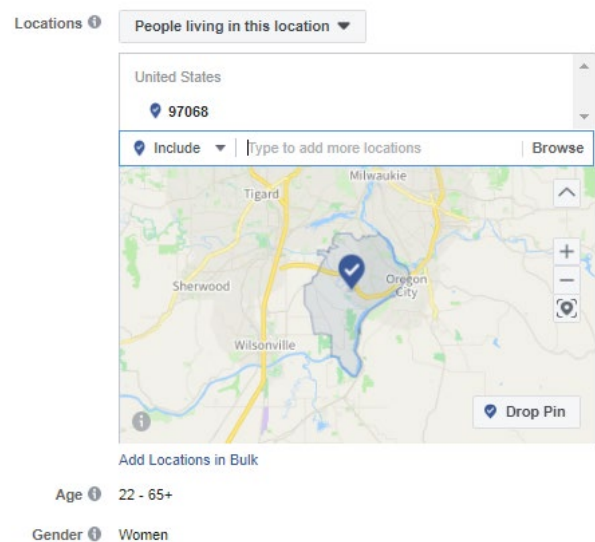
captures their attention. “We’re open again” is probably not a strong enough story, but “We’re open and featuring our Quarantine Survival Kit” or “We’ve hired Covid19 survivors.” Find a compelling story and it will be much easier to attract media attention.

- **“Press Release” eMail** – Once you’ve identified your story, now it’s time to get media attention. Reaching out personally will work much better than just sending out a press release. Find contact information on their websites for local newspapers, television stations and radio stations. Many stations have local morning shows that are looking for content, in addition to their news departments.

Targeted Advertising

When you’re ready to invest in limited advertising, you can do it without breaking the bank. Here are a few methods that can provide an affordable way to reach your audience within tight geographical targeting around your business.

- **Facebook Ads** – You can run Facebook ads for as little as \$5 a day. A large advantage is the ability to geographically target your audience. If you have a single location, so much of mass media advertising on radio or TV reaches people who are outside your trading area. When you can target just around your store and add additional targeting through gender and interests, your return on investment is much greater.



- **YouTube Ads** – Ads on YouTube can also be targeted, but they also can be much less expensive than Facebook Ads. Create a video and set up a campaign, and don’t be surprised if you begin to get video views for as little as 5 cents or less per view! To set-up a YouTube ad, use your Google Ads account and choose Video Ad to get to the various options.
- **Postcards** – The post office has a very affordable way to reach everyone in a carrier route or zip code that you designate. It’s called Every Door Direct Mail. You don’t have to have a special mailing permit because they’re delivering to every mailbox, which means you don’t have to add names or addresses! Get more information at <https://www.usps.com/business/every-door-direct-mail.htm>