

Today's New **Marketing Strategy**

a Virtual Exhibit Platform to create client
engagement 365 days a year

AV **ABSOLUTE VIRTUAL**
EXHIBITS. EVENTS. EXPERIENCES

a Virtual Exhibit is a **Bi-Lateral Communication Platform** that can offer:

- 1**
a Sales Showroom
- 2**
Private Meeting Spaces
- 3**
a Speaker's Stage
- 4**
Webinar Broadcast Auditorium
- 5**
Demonstration Platforms
- 6**
a Real Time machinery Demo
- 7**
In-Theater or On-Kiosk Videos

and so much more !





Marketing Strategy Today: rewriting the playbook

Is your head spinning? Radically shifting business models can feel overwhelming and complicated.

Marketers always strategize for the future and expect changes in how to market to their target audience. Surprise! We have apparently moved to the distant future overnight. There is no wait time as now, more than ever, we must persist in expanding our digital strategies to stay connected with our homebound or office attached audiences.

What a challenge this year has been. For most people their business has already shifted, and they are facing a wake-up call. The question everyone in business has in common right now; should we be following the old playbook or rewriting our playbook for the new normal?

No one knows exactly how the new normal will develop, now how long it might last, but we do know that many industries will be slow to recover, if ever. Companies selling products that no longer fit or wholesaling to an industry that will not be rebounding any time soon, need to make changes right now.

For the foreseeable future, virtual marketing campaigns will be critical — and with these strategies in your toolbox, you'll be able to continue connecting with your audience virtually the whole time. This may be the new normal and trade shows will be just part of a mixed marketing strategy.

Virtual Strategies: Meeting clients and prospective customers where they are today

What is needed? A strong marketing strategy that covers all aspects and dimensions of your business.. While B2B marketers continue to rate in-person events as one of their most effective marketing tactics, they are clinging to air. A solid strategy is required to make the most of every investment. The past few months have taught us that planning for the future includes much more than the “A” plan – you need several ways to turn. Why not wrap all of those ways together and when “A” returns you will just fit it into the overall strategy?



Stop Waiting: Host a Virtual Event or Exhibit Virtually at your Trade Show

Have your in-person activations, conventions, or conferences been canceled for the year? Are you now relying on a virtual trade show? That doesn't mean you can't hold an event — it just needs to move to a virtual environment. You can work with your show association if your exposition has gone virtual or move forward and create your own event. Again, **this event can be one day, one week, or 3 months – this is your plan and no one else's – this is not about compromise.**

There are wide-ranging benefits of hosting a virtual event. **You can invite as many people as you want no matter where they live,** and that goes for guests and audience members alike. Aside from any costs related to the video or streaming platform you choose, you won't have to worry about renting a location, travel, per diem, meals, or incurring any other costs associated with a traditional in-person event.

Instead, **focus your efforts around the production value of your virtual event.** Rather than simply scheduling a video meeting via the teleconference platform of your choice, make it feel like a real event with branded backgrounds, high-quality audio and video, and lots of interactive elements to keep audiences engaged. Ensure your presenters or hosts have plenty of time to prepare for the event, just as you would for an in-person appearance. Remember that distractions abound for audience members at home, so your event needs to be energetic and interactive to keep viewers engaged throughout.

Planning is not an easy task, but it can be **the most rewarding marketing strategy** you have ever created. Here are some elements to consider:

- **Pre-plan – virtual events must align with your business goals**

Pre-planning is essential - every aspect of your virtual trade show—pre-show, during-show and post-show—must be meticulously thought through and tied back to a strategy and aligned with your business goals and objectives.

- **Speakers – provide instant credibility to your product or service**

Speakers are powerful – Have speakers throughout the time period your virtual exhibit is open. Not necessarily during the virtual trade show. Speaking on a topic of expertise to a targeted audience provides instant credibility possibly an invitation a week before and then maybe a different speaker for the next three to six months. This gives potential clients a reason to return. Speakers provide a great excuse to bring attendees into your virtual environment

- **Timing – buzz generation starts weeks before an event ... even virtually**

Don't wait until the virtual trade show to start generating buzz. Take the opportunity to personally invite prospects and customers to meet you at the virtual trade show. Do not expect the association to get people to your portal or the \$40,000 animated sign that brought them in last year. Based on what you've planned for the show (presentation, promotion, new product launch, demos, free consulting time, etc.), give them a good reason to visit. Also, work ahead to schedule appointments with qualified leads for consultations, presentations, demos or other meetings in advance of the event. Face-to-face meetings are a great way to nurture leads or even close a deal. And this platform will accomplish that.

- **Design – play with the big boys, become expert branders, be bold**

Design your environment, messaging and giveaways to make an impact. This is the time to go whole hog. Size does not matter – play with the big boys. Design hint - be sure your brand is prominent and consistent with your other marketing materials across your portal page. All literature should be coordinated, and your giveaways reflect your brand, so choose items that are both unique and desirable. Remember swag is a button away from being sent.

- **Engagement – attract with a defined strategy and goals then share it with your staff**

Develop an engagement plan. Your booth should be staffed with energetic and enthusiastic employees that connect with event attendees and are implementing the strategy you defined long before they arrived. For show days you might have to extend your staff past a receptionist or two and salespeople. Keep that in mind when assigning people to work within the virtual exhibit.

- **Video – demonstrations and videos are compelling mediums for eliciting attention**

Videos and demonstrations can be powerful vehicles for drawing interest and concisely (and entertainingly) communicating more about your services and/or products. Quality is better than quantity in a virtual display. Know your audience and offer a degree of detail that matches their level of concentration.

- **Sort, Classify, Rank – follow up with every attendee but remember not every warm lead is golden** Create a post-event follow-up strategy. Just because the trade show is over, doesn't mean that your work is done. This is where many trade show efforts miss the mark. Follow up with the attendees that visited your booth and gave you their contact information. However, don't mistake all these contacts as warm leads and try to immediately sell to them. Send them an email to thank them for stopping by, offer them a free download of your presentation and try to gauge their interest. By the number of unsubscribes you get from your initial email, you'll quickly know who was interested in your company and who just wanted that iPad you gave away.

- **Campaign Building – every action must be followed with a reaction and new, vital content**

For those contacts remaining, set up a lead nurturing campaign. This will help determine which prospects are worth pursuing and save your sales team a lot of time and energy. Keep the buzz going by generating post-trade show content in your virtual exhibit and through social media channels.

- **Metrics - statistics offers a building block**

Metrics are everything and virtual exhibit metrics are more complete than from the trade show floor. Measure the results of your efforts according to the goals you set for the show and do so for several months after the show is over. It's important to get a 360-degree download of the show: successes, failures, shortcomings, the good, the bad and the mediocre. The reality is that sometimes your best ideas may fall flat when put into practice or your team is forced to improvise or adjust for one reason or another. Post-mortem debriefs are helpful to identify any lessons learned and action items that need to be taken to improve the success of the next trade show. This is where you get the information to tweak the virtual exhibit for the next round of appointments.

- **Plan your work - then work your plan**

Before show, during show, after show analyze and examine. Then make the most of the virtual world and modify. Revise and rework and invite clients in to see just one aspect – a new video, a speaker – keep the lines of communication open.



Leaning into Technology: **Disruption** **brings responsive** **innovation** that can change an industry

These are challenging times, and as we move forward, life may not return to what we knew before the crisis. **Will this crisis see the end of the handshake?** Are masks the new baseball cap? As a marketer, it's already changed the way we do business and market to customers. Those changes may take a permanent hold on our industry.

Change can be scary, but it can also be exciting. We are all learning to operate in this virtual world together, and that learning curve can get steep. Remember, technology gave us the internet, ushering in an era of rich knowledge sharing that we're still enjoying today. This is just the next step. **As a thought partner we can guide you through this virtual world.** We can suggest marketing techniques that will enhance your new virtual world as we have already experienced this world for other clients. We can all learn together and share experiences from one industry to the next.

Companies need to virtualize their products and make them accessible from anywhere, and **our platform is meant to act as a knowledge-sharing portal** with nonstop education, training, and digital tools and software that empower clients to maintain business continuity. With so many global trade shows getting postponed or canceled, the need to find alternative ways to engage with customers is higher than ever. Using your virtual exhibit platform as a hybrid approach with prerecorded content, live presentations and an interactive Q&A creates an active and dynamic event for participants.

Virtual Interaction: **Keeping the show moving forward on your time clock**

Executing interactive elements across all virtual marketing activities will become increasingly important — for the web, virtual exhibits, email campaigns, live webinars and so much more. Dependent upon your aptitude for reading the marketplace this will be keeping clients and prospects on the line.

Call to Action - Your audience's virtual content journey doesn't have to end when your live event does. After your event, try recommending related content, linking back to your website or virtual exhibit site, and possibly providing an opportunity to opt in to an email subscription or to contact your brand directly. A time-tested way of communicating this is to send a follow-up email to attendees. This works well because it can include multiple calls to action in one place, allowing the attendee to decide how they want to interact with you.

Social Media - Never miscalculate the power of social media. If you have built your brand's following across a variety of social channels use them to let people know that you just hosted a webinar (or any type of virtual event), and provide a link for them to learn more or access an on-demand replay.

Collateral - Offer some collateral, such as a white paper or an e-book. To make sure you're sharing collateral they'll find valuable, ask them to participate in a brief survey at the end of the presentation so you can gain deeper insights about their interests. Utilize the group chat feature our platform offers.

Real Time Voice and Video - If you were giving a presentation at an event, the attendees would be sitting next to each other, able to interact and exchange opinions about what they were seeing. Enabling our chat option for your virtual attendees can make them feel as if they are at the event itself, sitting with peers. The earlier the audience knows there will be an interactive element, the better! Consider a moderator fielding the comments or questions, especially if you plan on having a live Q&A at the end.

Polling - An interactive poll is a good way for the presenter to gauge the audience's level of engagement. It can also make the audience feel more like participants and less like spectators. More than ever, people want to feel like they are a part of something. Seeing their response reflected in a poll, influencing the content, can help do just that. Poll the audience during a presentation and have them choose the next topic to be discussed.



Conclusion: Marketing plan verses marketing strategy



Although the two terms are often used interchangeably, a marketing plan and marketing strategy are two separate elements of your business. A marketing strategy is what you need to achieve with your marketing efforts, and it's shaped by and should reflect your business goals along with the current business conditions. A marketing plan is the practical implementation of your marketing strategy. Both a marketing strategy and a marketing plan are necessary because they work together to promote and grow your business.

Once you comprehend what you are trying to achieve (strategy), you are better able to decide how to reach those goals (plan). When creating your marketing strategy, you should identify the short- and long-term objectives of the marketing initiative and how they interact with your overall business goals.

Discerning what customers, you're trying to reach, their perceived values, what drives their decision-making process, and the problem they're facing is paramount in determining your marketing strategy. Recognize who your competitors are, their market position, and their strengths and weaknesses. **Then identify what makes you different from competitors and why customers should believe in you.** Understanding how your brand is perceived relative to competitors will allow you to create a more complete and effective marketing strategy.

Once you have your marketing strategy completed, you can use it to create a detailed marketing plan that will achieve your specific goals. As you map your marketing strategy into a marketing plan, be specific when deciding what, how, and why you will communicate with your customers. The more specific you are in your planning, the easier it will be to follow through with effective implementation.

It's more important now than ever to pursue a virtual marketing strategy that meets customers where they are today. Now isn't the time to stay the course with whatever marketing strategy and plan you developed in the fourth quarter of 2019. Consumers' needs and habits have changed drastically, and your efforts must change with them. If you want to engage your brand's audience during this time you need to embrace the benefits of virtual marketing and implement such strategies right away.

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