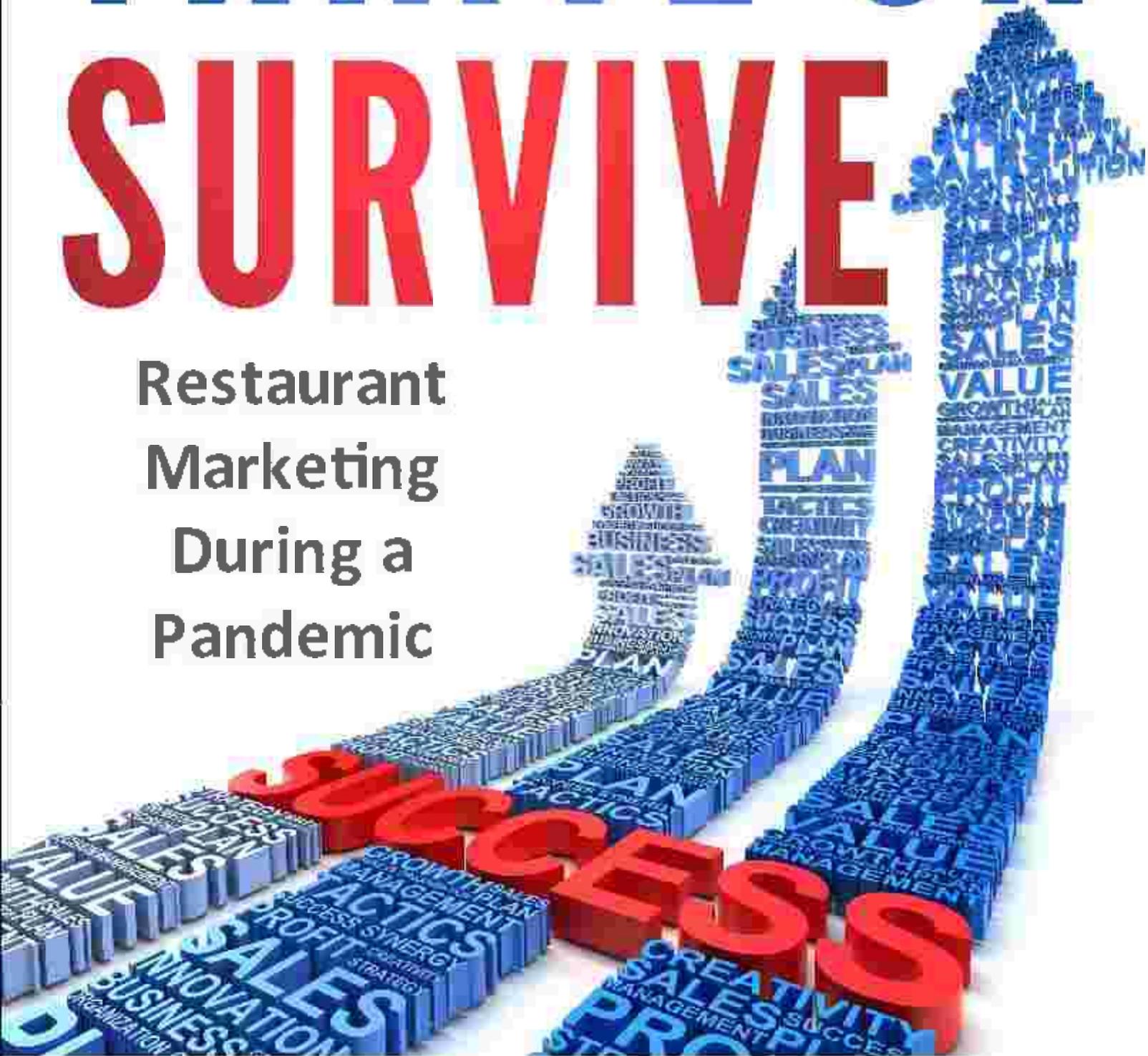


THRIVE OR SURVIVE

Restaurant
Marketing
During a
Pandemic



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Sometimes it takes a major event to show us our weaknesses. Everything is fine and along comes something like a pandemic. Suddenly you can't let customers come into your restaurant. This is most likely where most of your sales come from. You are losing sleep over making payroll and paying other bills. The thought of laying off your devoted staff weighs heavily on you.

These are thoughts that you most likely have been dealing with. The balance between doing the right thing to keep your employees and customers safe versus keeping sales coming in is challenging at best. Relying solely on help from the government will be frustrating because the political machine moves slowly and any assistance, they make available will be limited and in high demand. So, what are your options?

1. Do nothing and hope for a quick resolution.
2. Do just enough to try to survive.
3. Take a thrive mindset and creatively pivot your thinking and come out of the pandemic in better shape than you were before it happened.

Options 1 and 2 obviously are less desirable and could jeopardize the future of your business. Whereas the third option will build your business. It may also be more challenging for you for a variety of reasons. The biggest may be that this isn't something you are comfortable with or you just don't know where to start.

This e-book is not intended to make you feel like you are doing something wrong. It is intended as a tool to help you thrive and find success. So, let me ask you; Are you going to Thrive or Survive?

Who's Your Customer?

A fundamental mistake is not understanding who your customer is. You will need to determine who you are targeting. You will also need to determine what it is they need. If you aren't offering what they are looking for it is most likely they won't discover you. You will also want to know where they are in the buying process. It is much easier to sell to someone who has a need versus one who doesn't realize they have a problem. It's a lot easier to sell a bottle of water to someone who has been lost in the desert than to someone who is not thirsty.

Once you have identified your ideal customer it will be easier to communicate with them. You need to meet your customers where they are, not where you want them to be. In other words, go to the places they hang out and you will have a much better chance of getting noticed. For example, posting on Facebook won't reach a younger individual and you aren't likely to reach a baby boomer on Snap Chat. It's best to be as specific as possible when identifying your ideal customer. If you have more than one you should identify them separately. There is a worksheet at the end of this e-book to give you a good head start. You will want to review the avatars frequently because your messages need to be tailored to them and if you understand the way they think and what problem you are helping them solve it will make a dramatic difference in the success of your message.

You also need to keep in mind you aren't just providing a meal to them, you are solving a problem for them. If they were just hungry, they could make something at home, identify what the real problem is that you are solving for them. What about your business is special to them, is it the quality of the food, the atmosphere, etc.

New vs. Existing Customers

It costs five times more to market to a new customer than it does to market to an existing one. This fact is only a small part of the equation though. People want to do business with people they know, like and trust. An existing customer will not need to much encouragement to come back to your restaurant or service business if they had a great experience the last time they visited.

Are you familiar with the 80/20 principle? It basically states that 80% of your sales comes from 20% of your customers. The interesting part that you may not be aware of is it doesn't stop there. Of that 20%, the top 20% account for 80% of those sales. The principle is multi-layered, and you can analyze your best customers using it. It is a very powerful concept and can be applied to just about everything, including marketing. It can vary and, in some cases,, it could be 70/30 or 90/10, but the principle still holds up. So, the point is that identifying your best customers and sending messages specifically to them is the key to increasing sales without spending a lot of extra money and not much extra effort.

So, you have three options:

1. Get new customers
2. Get existing customers to come back more often
3. Get existing customers to spend more during each visit

As we've just discussed option 1 is the most expensive. There's nothing wrong with attracting new customers, you just need to realize there is a cost to that activity. If you look at options 2 and 3 there's less work and more focused marketing. These two options are also easier to implement quickly with the right tools.

Leverage Your USP

If you haven't determined your USP it is time to do that. What is a USP? It is your unique selling proposition. It is the thing that makes you different from all the other businesses just like you. You should focus on a positive trait that the prospect will respect and help them determine you are the right fit for them.

What do you offer that your competition doesn't? Why would the customer choose your business over another? What specific need does the customer have that you can fill? Asking yourself questions like this will help you understand your USP.

Let's look at an example, Sam and Diane want to celebrate their anniversary. They want to bring back the magic of their honeymoon in Italy. They are more likely to consider a family owned restaurant who focuses on fresh ingredients and a meal that they would get in the home of an Italian than they would get from a chain restaurant. Not that there's anything wrong with either choice. But to solve their problem having demonstrated in your marketing your USP it will help them choose your business over the competition.

When marketing your business, it is better to be a specialist than a generalist. Effectively identifying your businesses personality and strengths will dramatically help you in your messaging.

Create Your Message

The biggest mistake you can make is crafting a message that is strictly about your product or service. Your message in fact should be about the prospect and demonstrating how you can satisfy their need and transform their life. They will be more receptive to a message that helps with the pain or problem they are suffering from.

The content should be engaging and keep their interest. They are less likely to get bored and move on if they are engaged and are more likely to be receptive to your offer.

In terms of online content, your content must be good and serve a purpose. There are several reasons this is critical. One of the ways that search engines (especially Google) rank the quality of your website is based on the quality of the content on the pages. Good engaging content will increase the chances of ranking better in organic search (non-paid) results. Another reason it is critical, as previously mentioned, if the reader gets bored they will go on to the next website in search of a site that better meets their needs. Let's not forget that the content on your website is also a tool to demonstrate why the reader wants to do business with you, it builds trust.

Do You Need A Website?

Ask a dozen marketers and you will get a dozen different answers. Today social media is a valuable tool because it's low or no cost. It allows you to engage with your customers and prospects and create a voice for your business. Its weakness is that every other business wants their attention, and it can be difficult to get your message through. Think of it like standing on the rim of the Grand Canyon and yelling with the hopes you get their attention. It should just be one tool in your marketing tool belt.

The introduction of Facebook Messenger showed a lot of promise and many marketers saw great open rates on their messages, as much as 80%. The problem then became apparent, there were a small percentage of people creating "spammie" bots. This caused Facebook to get much tougher and now to get the reach that we expect you have to send a paid message. Still valuable at times, but realistically just another tool.

Some people say that e-mail is dead, but realistically e-mail marketing done right can be very effective. It also is a low or no cost solution. Which

is good because its downfall is an open rate of 20-30% for a well implemented campaign. Another issue is that it's easy to have your message get lost in the customers inbox. So, we'll put this in the tool belt, but not rely solely on it.

All these options have one flaw, you don't own it. A platform can go away at any time and you lose your content and ability to communicate with your followers. This can be devastating to put the effort in to building this and have the decision of the provider put you back at the starting gate.

The truth is a website gives you more than just the control of your content and contacts. It is your best salesperson. It never takes a break, goes on vacation, and works 24 hours a day. You can customize it to match your businesses voice and even potentially systemize tasks saving you time. It provides a consistent message that will represent your business in the manner you want. It can be a single page that contains the critical details or a very detailed site with functionality that assists your customers. The point is it can be as much or as little as you feel is appropriate and not having a website can impact your reach. There are also many benefits to having this information out there where the internet search engines can find it. If a prospect does a search when they are trying to figure out where to get dinner if your business doesn't show up in the search results your chances of getting a visit from them go down.

There are many businesses and individuals out there making big promises about getting your business ranked on the first page of Google. If this is a service you are interested in be careful. Ask lots of questions and look at their track record. Don't allow a less scrupulous provider to get your site de-listed. Using questionable tactics may work short term, but it can also be detrimental on an ongoing basis.

In my opinion it is important to have a website. It should be one of the tools in your belt. The organic reach alone makes you visible to those who want to find you. Not to mention it gives you the flexibility to help the prospect get to know, like and trust your business.

Leverage Word of Mouth

One of the best tools you can possess is the satisfaction of a happy customer. Someone who will tell their friends and family about your

business. When you go out of your way to make their experience great, they will want to tell others about it. At a minimum encourage them to leave a review on one of your various social media platforms, Google, Yelp or even your website. Offer an incentive of a gift card for them to give to a friend or family member. Give them a reason to brag about the great meal they had on their social feed. Don't be afraid to leverage this tool, we discussed earlier that working with those who know like and trust you helps, so why not let someone they know like and trust do the work for you.

Just because they had a good meal doesn't mean that it will occur to them to spread the word. Don't be afraid to give them a nudge and plant the seed. Appeal to their competitive side and gamify it and offer an incentive to the people who do the best job of evangelizing your business. Be creative and if you don't feel like you are a creative person get the feedback of someone you trust. Make it fun for the happy customer and they will be more likely to oblige.

Don't Forget the Plan

Having a marketing plan is crucial. Knowing when and where your message will be placed is an important part of your marketing efforts. If you have a limited budget it becomes that much more important. Setting off on this journey without a plan is equivalent to throwing money out the window.

It doesn't have to be anything elaborate; it just needs to be specific enough to guide your efforts.

Once you have the plan in action, you need to track the results. It is important to understand what works and what doesn't. You should also track where your new customers come from, even if it is just asking them how they found you.

Now that you know what's working revise the plan and repeat. Do more of what work and either eliminate or tweak what isn't working (if you can determine why it wasn't working).

Keep in mind you are selling an outcome, not a service. Your messaging needs to reflect this.

Do What You Do Best

Take some time to list your strengths and weaknesses. Focus your efforts on what your business is strong in. If you have feedback from your existing customers determine what they think your strengths are, you may be surprised.

When faced with something like a pandemic this can help you as well. Your strengths could be something like your facility has a patio so it's easier to accommodate outdoor dining or it could be specific dishes or beverages that make you unique. On the other hand, you might determine that you don't have the ability to support outdoor dining or your food doesn't travel well which impacts the quality of having food delivered.

Once you have these items identified it gives you a target for the issues that you need to focus on. Brainstorm potential solutions and don't be afraid to think outside of the box. The purpose of brainstorming is to come up with a list, not every idea will be feasible, but it can unlock other thoughts that may work.

Do Something Different

Now that you understand your strengths what you can do with these. Ask yourself what could be done with these to meet your customer's needs.

Come up with an activity that someone who is stuck at home could participate in. Do a live demonstration on preparing a signature dish, sell them a kit with the ingredients and access to the live feed. Just because you demonstrate how to prepare the dish it doesn't mean they won't come back. In when the pandemic is over because you offer more than just the meal. Another similar option could be a beer or wine tasting with the chance for the audience to ask questions.

What about corporate team building activities for workers working remotely? It looks at this point as if this could continue for many large businesses and offering a way for the company to offer this virtually can help them keep employees motivated and engaged. You also gain the advantage of being able to charge more because of the extra convenience you provide the employer.

Exploit your strengths and provide additional benefits to others in the process. If you promote your event as a VIP event you will gain the benefit of the "fear of missing out". Be creative and separate yourself from the

competition. This can also keep your business fresh in their mind and they are more likely to think about picking something up for dinner from you in a few days.

The key is to provide value. An event with a higher perceived value will bring a higher price. Thinking big can payoff, but you must provide the value you promised.

Get Out There and Do It

Now that you hopefully understand what is possible it's time to act. You aren't alone, nobody blames you for not seeing that a pandemic would come along and change the way we do business. The important thing to recognize is that you have the power to make changes and thrive. Taking the approach of riding it out until things calm down will only create more stress, debt and possibly even shut your business down permanently. If you have read through this e-book and are still engaged it tells me that you enjoy what you do and the feeling that you are enriching the lives of your customers. Don't let them down by failing to act. If you let the frustration marinate you are just hurting yourself. You aren't in this alone, talk to someone about the problems you are facing. It will help you feel better about it and they may have suggestions that can help. They may have some ideas that you hadn't considered.

About the Author

My name is David Robson, and I am passionate about helping people. Most of my career has involved positions where I was able to help. My business is not different from that. I help business owners create results through business, marketing, and financial changes. I am a Certified Guerilla Marketing Trainer and Coach and am sharing my knowledge and experience hoping that it will make a difference.

I have written this e-book because I understand the pressure that restaurant owners and managers are feeling with the current pandemic. I want to do what I can to help weather the storm.

I hope the content has been useful and if you just need someone to talk to feel free to reach out. My hope is that I was able to bring value with this e-book.

If you are curious about how we may be able to help feel free to check out our website at <https://www.premiertbs.com/marketing-services>

Want to see how we can help you communicate directly with your best customers and get them to come back and spend more? Text the keyword DEMO to 314-501-6927.

Start Here, Create Your Customer Avatar

Before you write your ad copy you need to understand who your ideal customer is.

It is easier to sell a bottle of water to someone who has been lost in the desert than to someone who isn't thirsty.

If you understand your avatar you can tailor the message specifically to them. This can dramatically increase the odds they will pay attention.

So let's get started, be as specific as possible. When you are done you should be able to close your eyes and picture this person. Refer to this document frequently to keep the avatar fresh in your mind.

Name

Gender

Age

Relationship status

Education

Location

Employment status (full time, part time, business owner, etc.)

Thrive or Survive

Job Title

Hobbies/interests

What makes him/her happy?

What are they frustrated about?

What pain or problem can you help them solve?

What benefit will they receive when they use your product/service?

Why will they choose you over the competition?