



30 Lessons COVID-19 Has Taught Marketers

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Great companies put consumers and data at the heart of every decision. That's critical whether you're building new products, creating ground-breaking campaigns or exploring new markets.

With Attest you can draft surveys, choose audiences from our pool of 100m consumers across 80 markets, and analyse results all in one end-to-end platform.

Anyone in your team can keep in constant contact with consumers, so you can make rapid decisions with confidence.

Start analysing results as soon as your survey is live, and receive hundreds of responses in a matter of hours, so research never slows your team down. Instead, it helps you act more quickly.

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Now, let's get to the good stuff...



“Attest is a catalyst for changing the culture of our company.”

Senior Executive, Discovery Network



“Takes the stress, time, and cost out of consumer research.”

Marketing Manager, Fever-Tree



Introduction

While we'd all agree that COVID-19 isn't a welcome addition to 2020, the pandemic has given us pause for thought. For marketers, this has meant a chance to reflect on practices, habits and beliefs, which in some cases have been ingrained for years.

In the worst affected industries, marketing professionals have had to completely tear up the rule book and start from scratch. It's not been easy, but it's led to a surge in innovation and creativity - and helped to unite the marketing community.

There's no doubt that marketers will come out of this stronger, more agile, more effective and better able to work together. We wanted to celebrate these positives, so we asked marketing professionals to share with us the most important lessons working through the pandemic has taught them. Read on for pearls of wisdom across all spheres of marketing, from PR to pricing. ▲



Lesson #1 – Show you care



Biland Sadek

Regional Commercial Director,
[PMI](#)

“The crisis has taught me to have a mindset that prevents me from overreacting to yesterday’s developments and helps me look ahead. It’s also humbled me and forced me to show my human side through open and transparent communication with peers and reports. Marketing-wise, one of the key learnings is the importance of customer relationships. This means staying reachable and treating customers with care in personal interactions and demonstrating care for the community through taking genuine actions.”

Lesson #2 – Maintain a marketing mix



Bethanie Dennis

Senior Content & Digital PR Manager,
[AGY47](#)

“I’ve taken some learnings in that if your marketing mix is well thought out and well balanced, and you have tactics that impact all stages of the marketing funnel effectively, you have a lot more flexibility in which levers to pull when the unexpected happens. There is always a channel that will work in times of uncertainty or turbulence, whether it’s a longer-term tactic like SEO or brand building, or shorter term such as PPC or affiliate marketing. If you’ve laid good foundations in an overall marketing strategy, there’s always an opportunity to pivot if necessary.”

Lesson #3 – Double down on performing audiences



Dennis Vu

CEO and Co-founder,
[Ringblaze](#)

“The one thing that this pandemic has taught me about marketing is that you should never rely on a single target market. There are different types of customers out there and some of them are handling the crisis better than others. When things get rough, focus on those customers that can help you stay afloat instead of trying to get the same old target audience to purchase. Don’t pivot, just readjust your perspective to find your top-performing channels and then double down on them.”

Lesson #4 – Keep communicating in a crisis



Holly Pither

MD and Founder,
[Tribe PR](#)

“I’ve tended to focus on winning earned media for my clients but, over these past six weeks, I’ve pivoted to help clients push out more client communications and draft more owned media. We’ve also changed the way we communicate with clients on shared channels too. All of this means they can continue to talk to clients even if they can’t meet them face to face. Some savvy clients have put their whole corporate entertainment budgets for the next few months into comms too. This is certainly a good tactic to keep those conversations with clients and prospects going at a time they need it most.”

Lesson #5 – Build strong relationships with journalists



Becky Stead

Digital Marketing Executive,
[43 Clicks](#)

“The COVID-19 pandemic has made me understand, even clearer, the importance of building relationships with journalists. Working in PR is not simply generating ideas. A lot of hard work is required to build relationships with journalists and that can be tricky to get right and also be time consuming. During the pandemic it has given me more time to make initial contact via social media and build the connection slowly – creating conversation and discovering the best way to reach out to them with a PR pitch.”

Lesson #6 – Control what is within your control



Petra Smith

Founder and Managing Director,
[Squirrels&Bears](#)

“While this is an extremely challenging time, it’s worth asking what this time is best for. A key learning for me is that, while you cannot manage the crisis, you can manage your response. There has never been a better time to reflect and rethink current marketing strategies. The ability to adapt rapidly is invaluable, as your first response may not be the final response and your marketing messaging might need to be adjusted based on how the situation develops.”

Lesson #7 – Be clear on your brand identity



Lottie Unwin
Founder,
[The Copy Club](#)

“Coronavirus has shown us that your whole business needs to know your brand identity and your tone of voice inside out, so that when a crisis hits (any kind of crisis), you can act fast and retain your character. There are so many examples of brands who under pressure are not speaking like themselves - like, whoever thought the phrase “unprecedented times” was on-brand? The “theory” really is important.”

Lesson #8 – Don't rush to discount



Maleeka T. Hollaway
Founder and CEO,
[The Official Maleeka Group](#)

“I have learned that even during a pandemic, pricing is not an issue when you know how to market. While specials and discounts matter during that time, when the value is there, a lower price is just an incentive to buy “right now” instead of later. The money is out there and people are waiting to see who will offer the best value for the price tag they see.”

Lesson #9 – Talk to your customers directly



Corina Perjan
Marketing Specialist,
[Capterra](#)

“Making any predictions about customer needs is trickier than normal. My usual tools for planning are less accurate now as these are often based on historical data. By the time you get any valid data points on the current demand, it may be too late. Therefore, talking to customer service, sales teams and even stepping out and helping these teams to respond to customer requests can significantly help to get some first-hand information on customer trends and behaviour. It's important to step away from Google Analytics from time to time and just listen to your customers – this will give you more context to interpret their online behaviour and help you come up with relevant solutions.”

Lesson #10 – Tearing up your marketing plan can be good



Richard Michie
CEO,
[The Marketing Optimist](#)

“At The Marketing Optimist, we’ve learned that throwing your carefully crafted marketing plans out of the window at a moment’s notice hurts - a lot! However, having to think on your feet and adapt by the second gives a rush of ideas and campaigns you would never have thought of given normal circumstances. Being really close to our clients is serving us and them really well too. We know their issues and pain points nearly as well as they do, so we’re helping them in areas that aren’t strictly marketing too. This kind of relationship has to be the way forward.”

Lesson #11 – You can’t rely on old data



Deborah Hanamura
Executive Director of Sales and Marketing,
[Paladino and Company](#)

“A lesson that we are learning is that the benchmarks and industry standards that we use to interpret sales and marketing data are out the window. Overnight, at least in B2B, the standard working hours, working days, and working conditions for our customers changed. Reading patterns, open rates, click throughs, optimized time-of-day email best practices – poof – useless. There is some truth to our old data benchmarks, but not enough to plan with. We are now developing entirely new data sets for benchmarking and optimization.”

Lesson #12 – Be where your customers are



Ethan Taub
CEO,
[Goalry and Loanry](#)

“The biggest lesson that the pandemic has taught me is that you have to be adaptable, even if you do not want to be. Many people have a tried and tested way to market to people, which has come falling down with COVID-19. Technology is right at our fingertips, and to not use it makes us so foolish. We have to be where the customers are, and they are on their phones, on social media and other applications. The way we can gain more custom and ultimately revenue is to let them know that we are here to help them, and we will follow them in their own consumer usage.”

Lesson #13 – We're all connected



Olga Gonzalez
CEO,
[Pietra Communications](#)

“The pandemic has really brought to light how interconnected we are. For the first time, every news story, every media opportunity, and every editor is weaving the overarching pandemic through the lens of the stories they tell. There is no “niche” marketing when we are all giving different variations of the same experience and how it affects us. It gives everyone - publicists, clients, editors - a common ground to relate to, and an even stronger community, working together to work through this and tell all these stories to the wider community.”

Lesson #14 – Good marketers have empathy



Christine Glossop
SEO Content Specialist,
[Looka](#)

“If there’s one thing that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught me, it’s that great marketing puts your customers first. While marketers talk a lot about empathy and customer-centricity, we can often get caught up in wanting to talk about ourselves. Call it a bad habit of the profession. When times are good, customers might be willing to look past it, but that approach doesn’t work during a global pandemic. Now, the only way to reach customers through the noise is to truly put them first and to consider their state of mind at every stage in the customer journey.”

Lesson #15 – Stay close to suppliers



Margo Schlossberg
Owner,
[KuraDesign Handbags](#)

“What I have learned or rather, what has been strengthened, for me and my business is the need to build relationships with suppliers. I have created a highly personal relationship with the supplier of the metal frames for my handbags which I believe has helped me obtain what I need in a timely manner. I have learned how they are dealing with their issues with manufacturing which has helped me understand and better communicate to my customers about wait times and more accurately create expectations.”

Lesson #16 – Keep advertising



Michael Lowe

CEO
[Car Passionate](#)

“To keep your brand alive you have to still keep up with the advertising and marketing side of the business, even if your business is not working to full capacity. Since the pandemic, I have now had the opportunity to sit back and really assess what is and isn’t working. The one area I think we all can improve on is digital advertising on more social platforms. I now realise how much time people spend on their phones and it is a great way to advertise; people don’t see it as intrusive when an ad pops up.”

Lesson #17 – Serve your audience (customer, or not)



Sam Starns

Founder,
[Sam Starns](#)

“As an adventure elopement photographer, couples book me not only for my photography style, but because I am my own brand. That has given me a leg up during this pandemic. I have an audience made up of thousands and, although most of those aren’t my clients, I’m still able to help them by providing knowledge and insight through my social media channels and blogs. Because of how I represent my brand and serve my audience (not just my clients), they have become resources for feedback, positive reviews, and testimonials. My audience and clients are anxious to be part of my platform, pandemic or not.”

Lesson #18 – Build trust through education



Lee A. Sheridan

Owner,
[Two Maids & A Mop](#)

“I own a cleaning business as well as a short term rental business and this pandemic has taught me how to shift gears within my own industry. While we have always sanitised and disinfected, our marketing wasn’t focused on this since people were not necessarily worried about it. Today, our marketing is about disinfecting and safety to prevent illness and sickness. This has been well received and has generated some new business. We have also shifted to becoming the trusted professional in the industry vs just another cleaning company. Establishing trust and educating people now should pay off down the road.”

**Lesson #19 –
Don't delay digital
transformation**



Bernie Wong
Founder and Owner,
[Social Stand](#)

"I've learned to not sit and expect everything to resume like it was before this current pandemic. The worst days will pass but customer behaviour will not change back to like it was before (anytime soon, anyway). We must adapt immediately and work hard on what could become the new normal. Treat the current situation as a catalyst and speed up the digital transformation you must make to stay above water. Sales funnels and marketing automation may change forever right under our nose, and that's just the new normal."

**Lesson #20 –
Crisis can lead to innovation**



Daniel Chan
Director of Business Development,
[Bay Area Dinner Show](#)

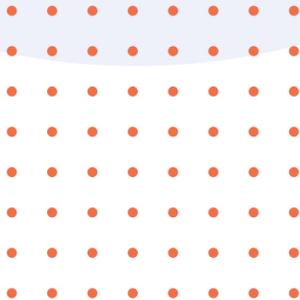
"Before the crisis, I was one of the hardest working corporate magicians in Silicon Valley but coronavirus put the brakes on everything. My wife and I started brainstorming, trying to think our way out of the problem. I tried a few free online shows and then I got booked for an online birthday party. I had to figure out how to make it a fully interactive experience online. I pulled it off and, soon, corporate clients were asking me to deliver shows over Zoom. Next, an agency based in Las Vegas contacted me. I realised I had become the go-to guy for providing virtual magic shows. Before the crisis, most of my business was centered in the San Francisco Bay Area. Now I've gone virtual, I'm working at events all over the world."

**Lesson #21 –
Answer to your customers' fears**



Randy VanderVaate
President and CEO,
[Funeral Funds](#)

"What this pandemic taught me as a marketer and as a life insurance broker is that fear is an effective motivator for people who procrastinate to purchase life insurance. The coronavirus has created fear in the world. People often only realise the importance of something like life insurance when it is too late. My role is to eliminate my client's fear by helping them with financially sound planning and quality life insurance products."



Lesson strategy #22 – Market feelings not products



Jendi Coursey
CEO,
[Jendi Coursey Communications](#)

“COVID-19 reinforced the importance of marketing to meet the essential needs of key audiences. The product or service doesn’t matter as much as the way it makes the client or customer feel. For example, are pediatrics offices simply selling health care for children, or are they also selling the feeling of being a good and responsible parent? I’d say both. Successful marketers will be able to adjust as their key audiences’ needs fluctuate through Maslow’s hierarchy. Do people need messages about safety and security or should messages be geared toward belonging? “Read the room,” as they say.”

Lesson #23 – Lead the way for clients



Stephanie Wilson
Vice President,
[Vanguard Communications](#)

“As a marketing agency specialising in medical practice marketing, we’ve learned how important it is to lead the client in times of crisis. With so much to juggle already, clients appreciate when you take the lead with timely insight and a well-formulated communications plan. Central to this is the repurposing of content for all channels (web, email, social), as it’s the #1 effective way to quickly create a high volume of content that clients will value. It also enables you to generate a lot more while limiting the need for client review and approval, saving clients (and you) time and energy.”

**Lesson #24 –
The internet is king**



Norhanie Pangulima
Content Ambassador,
[Hernorm](#)

“I have learned that the internet is king. As we can see, almost every brick-and-mortar store has been forced to shut down, but the stores based on the internet have continued to flourish. Seeing this, I am determined to improve my skills in digital marketing, because I believe that eCommerce is the future of all businesses. That means endless opportunities!”

**Lesson #25 –
The importance of brand personality**



Laura Fuentes
Operator,
[Infinity Dish](#)

“We often talk about brand personality, but its importance has never been as clear as during this pandemic. It wasn't until we faced the COVID-19 crisis that brand personality was ever put to the test. You may claim to prioritise customers or staff, but the truth only comes out when your revenue and profit is threatened. To retain customer loyalty, your brand personality needs to reflect what you'd expect from a close friend - moral, reliable, kind, charitable, etc. In fact, it turns out that being a good company is largely the same as being a good person.”

**Lesson #26 –
Helping others builds brand support**



Jacob J. Sapochnick
Founder,
[Sapochnick Law Firm](#)

“I felt that it was my social responsibility to help others so I donated some of my savings to a non-profit organisation supporting frontline workers. What I learned by doing this is that customers tend to affiliate and endorse a brand that helps other people, especially during this time. I have had the chance to build stronger relationships with my customers by talking with them and asking them how they are. 56% of consumers report being happy to learn about how brands are helping in response to the coronavirus pandemic, according to a recent survey from the American Association of Advertising Agencies.”



Lesson #27 – Diversify your income streams



Toby Schulz

Co-founder and CEO
[Maid2Match](#)

“Many industries are never going to return to the exact same way of operating after COVID-19. Evolution means being the most adaptable to change, and marketing is not immune to this. It’s important to diversify your income streams for the business. Similarly, there is no use spending on advertising for services that are just not in demand. Adapt accordingly. For us, this meant that when we saw a drop-off from one stream (recurring cleans for private homes) it didn’t mean we had to close up shop. We were able to redirect our marketing efforts on deep cleans, bond cleans and National Disability Insurance Scheme.”

Lesson #28 – eCommerce websites matter



Scot Chrisman

Founder and CEO,
[THE MEDIA HOUSE](#)

“Now we are witnessing how it is important to digitise our businesses amidst restrictions on social interactions. Even if my business is already focused on digital marketing strategies and building online presence since before the outbreak, I was still able to learn new strategies and trends to keep up with my competitors. If this was important before, after lockdown it will surely be more important.”

**Lesson #29 –
Loyalty is forged in bad times**



Paige Arnof-Fenn

Founder & CEO,
[Mavens & Moguls](#)

“I predict the most trusted leaders and brands will have a big competitive advantage in the new normal that evolves in a post-Corona world. Employees, customers and clients will remember who treated them well during the crisis and they will be rewarded with loyalty from earning that trust during the bad times. The current crisis has provided a stage for our political and business leaders to rise to the occasion. We have learned that it is about touching people in meaningful ways which may mean being less busy, not more, for a while.”

**Lesson #30 –
Don't just give to receive**



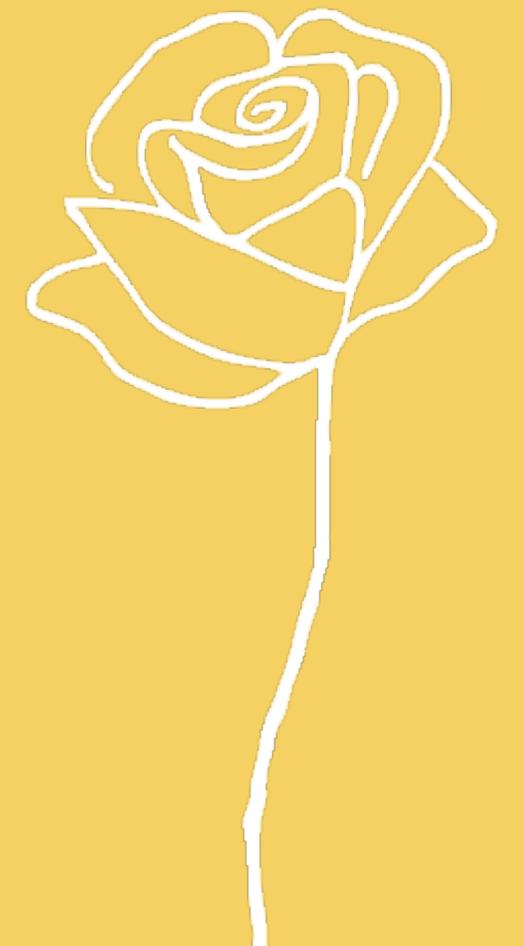
Raps Gill

Founder & COO,
[Vaal & Vaal](#)

“It's a wakeup call to businesses - investing time into your customers should always be near the top of your marketing plan. Much of the 'value add' marketing that companies have done since COVID-19 may not have the desired effect because it comes off like, "here is some advice for you because we have nothing else to do at the moment". For example, we're now seeing personal trainers doing free online tutorials and world class bars and restaurants sharing secret recipes for making your favourite dishes and cocktails at home. These are things that could have always been given to add value to your customers lives.”



Like the rose that grew from the concrete, beautiful things can arise from adversity. COVID-19 has thrown up many challenges for marketers - and they're not over yet. But, as this collection of stories proves, we're not only ready to tackle them, we're going to learn and grow from them too.



Thanks for reading

Get in touch!

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