

What Covid-19 taught us about going back to basics with customer communication

By  Brent Haumann

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When Covid-19 really started to make its mark on the world and countries began to shut down, companies communicated with their customers. A lot. That's not too surprising. It's all they could do. What quickly became clear, however, was that some organisations were doing a much better job than others.



Image source: [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

What separated the great communicators from the average and poor ones, however, wasn't the technologies or channels they were using. And it certainly wasn't the volume of communication (which only served as a reminder of which lists you needed to unsubscribe from in the case of the worst offenders). While those were all factors, the real differentiator was much simpler.



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The organisations that really stood out during the worst of Covid-19 were the ones who understood the fundamentals of customer communication and did the basics brilliantly.

Back to basics

That's important because, in a world where technology is constantly evolving, it's all too easy to get caught up in the "next big thing". As a result, we can sometimes forget how important the basics of good customer communication are.

With people spending more time at home and being increasingly dependent on digital channels than ever before, it's never been so apparent that in order for customer communication to be effective, it cannot simply exist for its own sake. It's also never been so important for companies to ensure that any communication they sent their customers is relevant and hyper-personalised.



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The wrong communication to the wrong person, on the wrong day, can end up costing you a customer on a good day. It's all but guaranteed to do so at a time of heightened anxiety and economic turmoil. At a time where every customer is vital, that's something no organisation can afford.

Listening, tech, and data

While emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), coupled with smart data analysis can go a long way to helping ensure that companies achieve the requisite levels of personalisation, they are not the be-all and end-all. When it comes to figuring out what a customer wants from your communication with them, you have to put them at the centre.

That means asking customers directly what content they want to receive, when and how, rather than simply relying on data. By taking this dual approach, organizations can combine preference and engagement data (technology), with input obtained directly from the people best suited to design the process: customers and employees (humans). As a result, organisations can ensure that they provide customers with the kind of communication they want, at the time they want it.



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Reaping the rewards

The incentives for organisations to get this right have never been greater. By focusing on the basics of customer communication, organisations can build trust and engagement.

And by building trust, organisations also build loyalty. That's important because returning customers routinely spend more money on brands they're loyal to. Research also shows that the probability of selling to an existing customer is 60-70%. By contrast, the probability of selling to a new potential customer is just 5-20%. Even more significantly, 80% of a business' future profits will come from just 20% of its existing customers.

With businesses experiencing ongoing strain from Covid-19, the ones that survive (and eventually thrive) will be those who understand these fundamentals and execute them well. Certainly, they may use new technologies as enablers, but they won't see them as strategies in and of themselves. It's an important balance to get right, but there's no replacement for going back to basics.

ABOUT BRENT HAUMANN

Brent Haumann is the Managing Director at Tilt.

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