

Online Survival Sales Tactics in the Era of Covid-19

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In a matter of days, the world has been turned upside down. Covid-19 has shut down the global economy. Among those suffering are independent jewelry store owners who look forward to spring weddings, graduations and Mother's Day shopping to drive sales and generate significant revenue. In this unprecedented era of social distancing and quarantines, these celebratory events have mostly been postponed or cancelled. Many retail shops have closed or are doing limited business (take-out versus dine-in at restaurants, for example). While the official date of Mother's Day is still May 10th—there will be no taking Mom out for brunch or dinner this year.

What to do? Curse the dark or light a candle!

Your customers are sitting at home but they have plenty of time to go online to browse and shop. Now is the time to make a pivot and create a strong online store presence that is still local and reflects your brand. Here are a few practical suggestions for generating online sales until all this passes.

Facebook: maintain customer contact during this down period. Hopefully you have a Facebook page (and if not, now is the time to build one). Take the time now to expand your “friends” and “following” lists. If you're in a city or town where store closing has been ordered or you have made the decision to close your store yourself, consider offering “by appointment” or direct them to your website for on-line shopping.

E-commerce site. Covid-19 has accelerated the buying trend to shop on-line. If you don't have an e-commerce tab on your website, consider creating one now. Setting up an on-line store could be a significant lifeline to generate sales. Use Facebook to drive traffic to your on-line store. Customers can preview featured merchandise on-line and either make the purchase on your website or call you at the store for an appointment to pick and pay for the gifts. You can be creative and offer in-store “video shopping.” Use facetime, Zoom or other popular video conferencing apps to connect with customers so they can see you and preview merchandise in real time.

Offer Concierge Customer Service. If you have The Edge or some similar sales and inventory software system, select your best repeat customers and send them a personal e-mail, letter or even call

them to let them know you now have a “Concierge” shopping service—a combination of on-line and by appointment sales strategy to help them select gifts for family and friends. Offer free gift wrapping and shipping services.

Repair Business. If you can do repairs in-house, offer curbside drop off or even home pick-up and delivery service. Repair revenue is pure profit and yet another service to advertise to customers on your Facebook page and website.

Inventory analysis—sell aging inventory on-line. If you haven’t done a recent and thorough inventory, now is the time to do that. Aging inventories, can burden even the most prosperous store. Merchandise that doesn't sell must be insured. There are also storage costs, taxes and the fact that you have your working capital tied up in a resource that isn't making you money for you. Since these costs continue to rise, tight inventory control is still one of the best operating strategies. After you’ve completed your inventory, consider doing an on-line sale to sell those items at a significant discount.

Having a strong and versatile online store presence through Facebook and your website will help generate sales now. But even when the Covid-19 crisis passes, these online marketing tools will continue to help you grow your business. This is a good time to work and bring your on-line store up to speed.

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