



Horwath HTL

Hotel, Tourism and Leisure

INDUSTRY REPORT

The Excitement of Post-Covid Marketing

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I am reminded every time I go to my almost empty gym that membership is down 70 percent due to the Covid 19 pandemic. I wonder with the exciting news of a vaccine and hope of eventually getting back to “normal,” are small businesses like my gym ready to enter an entirely new scenario?

The economy has undergone a horrible decline in business during the past year and there is no training manual showing small businesses how to react once the virus is in the rear-view mirror. Here are a few tips to help you prepare for recovery.

Are You Operationally Ready?

A vast majority of the population for the past year has been caged in their residences, forming a horrible habit of going nowhere. During this period, many businesses and their employees were in survival mode. Hopefully, in the not too distant future, even the most skeptical will leave their abodes to revisit retail establishments. Before they even start the marketing process, businesses need to ensure employees are hired and trained to handle a new level of excellence in customer service - the best marketing tool any service company has. Marketing is totally useless with poorly trained employees. Training must always occur before marketing.

Any service company thrives on repeat business, so do not assume employees are ready for the potential increase in sales. With this greatly reduced level of business during the past year, employee performance will be “rusty.” Remembering that training is a philosophy, not a one-time event will help change the culture in your establishment.

When you re-open your doors, business success will depend on creating an environment filled with employees excited about seeing customers again. Management must constantly remind employees to welcome customers back to your place of business by showing appreciation. Simply saying, “Welcome back,” is a no cost marketing strategy that works. Have employees convey this excitement by gathering at the front door entrance and not within the unseen bowels of the facility.

Create a culture that focuses on the bright future and not the dismal, Covid past. There is a reason a car’s windshield is approximately ten times the size of the rearview mirror. It’s more important where you’re going, than where you have been. Excitement starts with a focus on driving ahead with a bright future and not looking at the past challenges everyone faced with the pandemic.



Exciting Approaches to Marketing Your Reopening:

- Painting and sprucing up your service area will help create a fresh feeling within your space. A new color will help to remind everyone that Covid 19 is in the rear-view mirror.
- Thank your employees who have stuck with you during the past year. Find a creative way to recognize these employees with posters or pins. Acknowledge their sacrifice to your patrons. Customers appreciate it when businesses recognize employee loyalty.
- Never take your customers for granted. Don't forget to thank them upon their departure. They will leave with a pleasant thought and it will greatly help to ensure their return visit.
- We don't know if business will be better or worse post-covid, but we do know business will be different. Embrace and recognize change because it will happen. It is up to management to create a culture filled with encouragement-especially when surrounded by change.
- A new appreciation for customer and employee loyalty must happen if we expect our businesses to recover. A simple thank you goes a long way. Contests can also be utilized by trading out for prizes from nearby companies. Remember do not take loyalty for granted.
- Keep connected with your local Chamber of Commerce/ Visitor's Bureau which are a great resource that can help with marketing ideas including assisting with your online presence.
- Ask your most loyal customers to post their great experience on social media.
- Establish expectations that encourage every service employee to build a professional relationship with five, ten or even twenty customers. These relationships play a vital marketing role in sales improvement.
- Customer feedback is now an even more essential marketing tool for management and employees. hep Hyken put it well when he said, *"It is not enough to simply say you're customer-focused - you have to put that into practice in every aspect of your business. Start by listening to your customers."*

Marketing is about communication. It is important to remember when entering a new stage of business that success depends on how management positively communicates to employees and customers. Life has changed but recovery depends on the excitement that the future hopefully brings. By communicating this positive attitude to customers and employees your recovery is greatly enhanced. It is the best return on investment you could ever make.

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