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No events.. now what?

The ramarketing guide to event alternatives

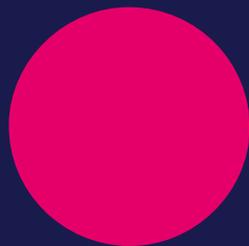


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The recent global spread of COVID-19 has led to multiple event cancellations across the industry and widespread travel restrictions. Having no trade shows, site visits or conferences in the calendar brings challenges but also presents an opportunity to try marketing tactics and implement strategies that you may not have thought about before.

Whether you're looking to maintain key client relationships, boost brand awareness or shore up your lead generation strategy, we've got some ideas to make up for the current lack of face-to-face time.

This guide gives an overview of topline tactics to consider for your business in the coming months.



01. Client relationships

A huge part of trade show attendance is simply connecting with existing customers whilst you're in the same place at the same time. Whether discussing an existing project or the possibility of doing more business together, face-to-face time can be invaluable for building relationships with clients. In lieu of the opportunity to catch up with clients in person, there are some other opportunities you can take advantage of:

Use a creative direct mailer to replace a drinks event

Were you planning to host a drinks event? Or had you invited key customers for a drink? A fun direct mailer could include a miniature spirit to show customers that you don't break your promises. Perhaps you were going to catch up for a cuppa? Why not get creative and send them everything they need to make their preferred drink instead.

Bring the show to your customers and send gifts through their local suppliers

If you were planning to visit the Big Apple for DCAT Week or INTERPHEX, consider sending your customers a fun gift to bring the New York experience to them. How about a New York cheesecake or

bagel? This is a thoughtful touch that will help to keep you front of mind with key customers. Of course, accompany this with a marketing message to communicate what you were planning to discuss with them in person.

Create personalised video messages

Events are all about face time so consider other ways to get your face in front of key contacts. There are some clever, easy to use tools that allow you to create and share short videos via email. Consider hosting these on branded landing pages with an added personalised touch to show customers that you care.

Conduct planned meetings via video conference

One of the hardest parts of planning an event is getting meetings booked in with your prospects in the first place. If you've already done the hard bit and secured time in the diary with someone you'd like to do business with, why waste it? Keep your original time slot and see if you can hop on a video conference instead.

02. Brand Awareness

Being seen and heard at events is an invaluable way to get your brand out there. But modern technology means that there are plenty of ways to boost brand awareness in the absence of a showstopping stand design or cracking live presentation:

Create a virtual press room

Your latest news is a big draw at events for journalists and prospects. Why not create a personalised, branded landing page to host news meant for a key event and send it out to your database and media contacts to keep them updated? In lieu of events to cover, journalists will likely have a gap to fill.

Set up journalist interviews

Events are a great way to get face time with journalists but interviews can happen virtually too. Journalists that were planning to attend your events will now find themselves with more time in their schedules and space to fill, so use this time to outreach to them and share your stories.

Start a regular vlog or blog series on how you are responding to COVID-19

It's important to protect your reputation and reassure your customers in these uncertain times. Vlog or blog updates will position you as a proactive and professional organisation that is well prepared to handle the situation. Optimising this content for relevant search terms will also help to raise your brand profile and increase web traffic. If a series isn't for you, consider issuing a short statement commenting on your response to COVID-19. As well as hosting this on your website, it could be supplied to trade journalists covering the topic too.

Set up a virtual roundtable event

Panel discussions bringing leaders together are a highlight of any industry conference but there are also ways to conduct these virtually. Setting up a roundtable discussion through a conferencing platform is a great way to demonstrate your expertise and thought leadership.

03. Lead Generation

One of the primary reasons behind many businesses attending an industry event is to nurture warm leads and generate new ones. Targeted digital and social marketing tactics can help to achieve this, in the absence of face to face networking opportunities.

Consider Account Based Marketing for high priority prospects. If you were hoping to meet with some warm leads in order to 'seal the deal' at upcoming events, why not consider a super bespoke marketing campaign? First, you'll need to gather all the insights you have about that company. Then, use the insights to create tailored marketing content focused on their business priorities. This could include a bespoke direct mailer, e-book, video, infographic and LinkedIn In-Mail. It may seem like a lot of effort, but data shows that it's worth the investment.

Start listening

Events are an important tool to hear what customers and prospects have to say and build relationships. Social listening can also help to achieve this. Invest some time into building out your contact list on LinkedIn and start listening to the conversations taking place. Comment on relevant news alerts, participate in relevant groups and post relevant content to build

your professional brand through thought leadership and to unlock potential sales opportunities.

Consider a content marketing campaign

A consistent and targeted content campaign that is based on insights and a clearly defined audience is one of the best strategies for driving profitable customer action. How can you achieve this? Establish your audience, understand their pain points and create a relevant and compelling message. Use this to develop a range of engaging content that can be used across multiple platforms to drive your audience from awareness to consideration, to the holy grail: conversion.

Target your ideal audience with LinkedIn advertising

One great way to get in front of your audience in the absence of an event is social advertising. LinkedIn is a unique platform that allows you to target very specific audiences, so you know that you're reaching the right people. Select a list of companies, job titles and industries to create a targeted list of people that you know are interested in your product or services.

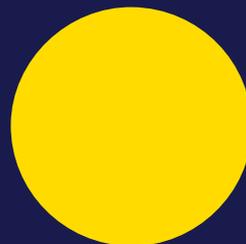
03. Lead Generation continued

Set up a webinar in collaboration with a top industry publication

If you had a speaking opportunity at an event that has fallen through, then a webinar could be the next best thing. Webinar attendees are the perfect qualified lead, showing clear interest in what you have to offer by signing up. Partnering with a top trade publication to help host your webinar will help provide credibility and enable access and exposure to a broad and relevant database, helping to increase awareness and participation.

Arm your commercial team with a toolkit

The lack of opportunities to network with key prospects and highlight your capabilities and latest news will be a real blow to your sales team. Now's a great time for them to consider social networking opportunities and email marketing to fill the gap. Why not arm them with a 'toolkit' full of useful content they can have to hand? For example your latest credentials documents or product sheets, some links to your latest news and thought-leadership articles in the trade media, or even some content they can share on LinkedIn to become more active.



04. Site visits

With international travel restrictions increasingly in place, this could mean limited to no site visits from key customers and prospects for the foreseeable future. Site visits often form an important part of the buyer journey, allowing you to showcase your capabilities and expert team, so we've come up with some ideas to achieve a similar result virtually.

Replace site tours with a video walkaround of your facility

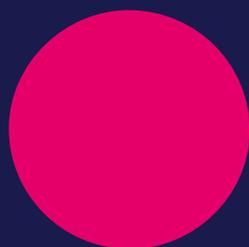
Finding ways to showcase your site virtually through video tools can help potential customers see what you have to offer from afar and give them a better idea of the scale and capabilities at your site.

Start a meet the machine series on social media

In the absence of an event booth and facility tours to display and discuss your top technologies, create bitesize visual content for your social channels that will increase awareness of your capabilities and ensure they remain front of mind.

Invest in photography

Make sure your online shop window is in order by investing in some high quality photography for use on your website and social in absence of site visits.



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Now you're prepared...

Now that you're armed with some creative ideas to combat the lack of industry events, take some time to consider your objectives in order to select the best strategy. If you need to raise profile, support lead generation and nurture customer relationships in the absence of events, get in touch with team ramarketing for some help implementing your chosen marketing tactics.

