

ADJUSTING TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

22

TACTICS TO

RESCUE

YOUR ECOMMERCE

FROM COVID-19

Last updated: March 31, 2020.

This is a COVID-19 CRISIS Survival Guide for eCommerce.

If you want your business to make it to the other side of the devastating Coronavirus pandemic, you must take ten minutes to read this.

4 big takeaways from this reading:

1. Learn a framework for surviving the crisis through experimentation, including a step by step guide of actions you need to take right now
2. Be able to design and implement a strategy designed specifically for facing the Coronavirus Pandemic
3. Understand how to track your progress through the selection of leading actionable metrics
4. Get a ready-to-implement pack of tactics to impact on your leading metrics.

After reading this document, you will be in a position to take more and smarter actions to help your business surface the effects of the pandemic. It will also arm you with the right tools and mindset to make it even further and seek revenue growth, yes, even in times of recession.

We are helping online merchants achieve growth, and if you need help, you can reach out to our team for a free of charge strategy session.

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COVID-19 EFFECT IN SHOPPING BEHAVIOR

When the main stock market index drops more than 10% in one day, we can safely say we're in a state of **TOTAL UNCERTAINTY**.

And no one is safe: this affects businesses, manufacturers, retailers, and consumers. The most concerning aspect of this global-scale crisis is that there's no clarity on how deep and for how long it will run.

In this context of uncertainty, one thing is certain. The shopping behavior of your buyers is rapidly changing, regardless if you're B2B, B2C, if you live in Moscow, Atlanta or Melbourne.

As an example, at the time of the last update of this document, China and Italy had reported a 30% increase in mobile device usage in only one month.

Telecommunications giant Vodafone also reported that internet usage spiked 50% during the quarantine. In Italy, Facebook is seeing up to 70% more time spent on its applications since the crisis hit, with Instagram Live and Facebook Live views doubling in one week.

Shoppers are now more likely to land on your website from their mobile device, than ever, and this is just one of the many ways in which buying habits are quickly changing.

These upcoming weeks will continue to unwind many more changing patterns, and as a result, will set new challenges in how your web store is supporting the new needs of shoppers.

“Buying habits are changing as you are reading this survival guide.”

The only way out of a crisis is to act fast.

Be like a dolphin! Be quick in reacting to your surroundings, change direction fast and adapt to your market and consumer needs. **Don't be a whale.**

If you have an eCommerce, the odds are that it's suffering during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Don't panic. This survival guide will arm you with all the tools you'll need to hold water.

EXPERIMENTATION IS THE ONLY PATH FOR SURVIVAL

If past crises have taught us anything, is that the companies that prevailed did so thanks to their willingness to experiment, testing new ideas creatively.

Creativity and quick thinking are paramount in innovation to adapt to the new needs of consumers. **But most important is to put a system in place that will allow your business to experiment with a growing pipeline of new ideas rapidly.**

Here are some examples from brands that in the midst of recession were able to turn things around and achieve hypergrowth.

The **Snuggie** appeared with an aggressive direct marketing campaign during the 2008 recession. Morale was low, and people were trying to save money, so this affordable product became a hit. After five months only, they had sold over 20 million units!

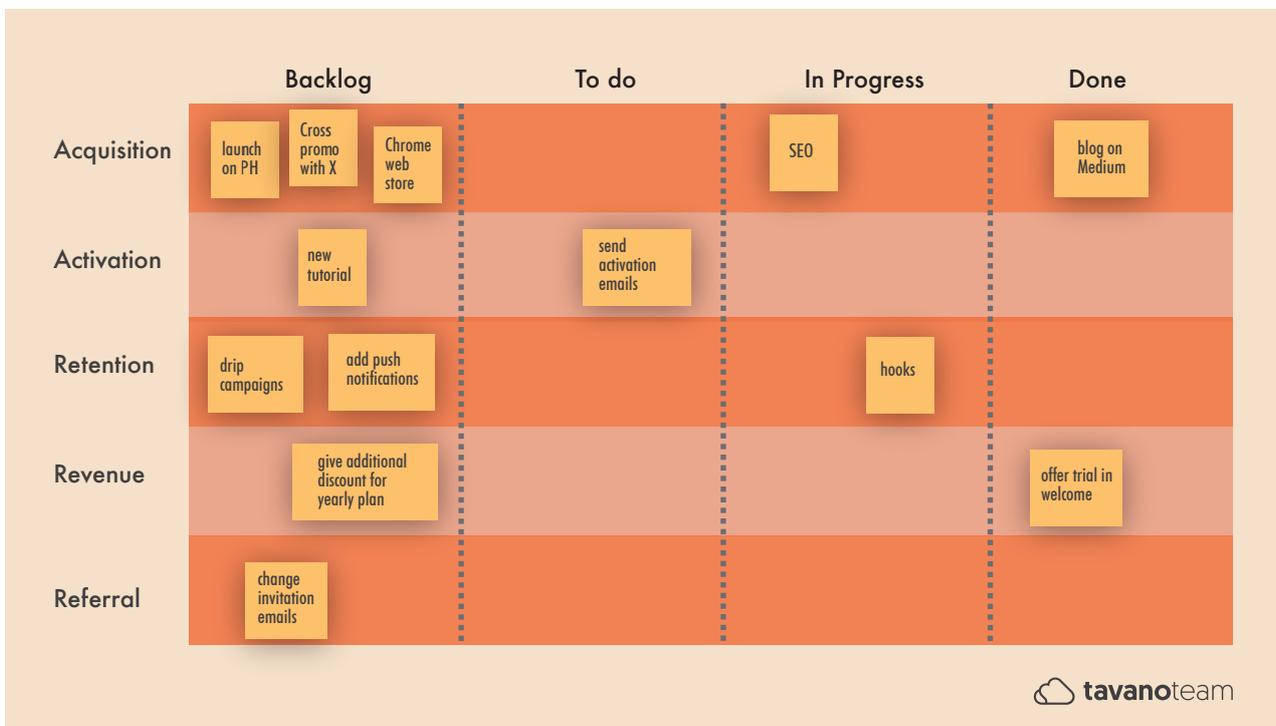
Likewise, **Groupon** launched also during the 2008 economic crisis. With their daily deals, they helped consumers afford a broader range of products, and they helped businesses to continue to sell to a new and wider audience.

Domino's wasn't new in the pizza business, but their product wasn't the most popular. After understanding their need to adapt, and following extensive market research, they announced in 2009 their new and improved recipe. In the next quarter, profit more than doubled, proving that listening to consumer needs is the way to go.

“Businesses who don’t have an experimentation mindset will be hurt.”

To keep pace, rapid experimentation is now a marketing mandate. Iteration is a must.

As Jeremy Stoppelman, CEO of Yelp, said, “You want experimentation. Every once in awhile, you stumble upon something that blows your mind.”



You don’t know what people will respond to, nobody does. So you have to keep trying. Your business must have an experimentation mindset and methodology, especially your eCommerce channel stakeholders.

The game is to outsmart your competitors with creative new tactics, to measure systematically, and to build an agile team ready to act and implement fast.

SETTING UP THE STRATEGY AND KPIs

For you to fast track the implementation of your tactics and start testing now, we are handing you a ready-to-go blueprint strategy designed by our growth experts.

This blueprint will provide you with:

- **A medium to long-term company-wide goal/vision** set by your business stakeholders (this is our assumption)

- The **main goal** that will guide your efforts

- The **leading actionable metrics** that will help impact the main goal and where all tactics and experiments will be aiming to. All experiments will be designed to impact these actionable metrics.

This part is essential in making the experimentation process efficient for the business. Most teams miss the mark and dive directly into implementing endless tactics without a clear focus.

With the strategy in place, your team should work to impact the previously set leading actionable metrics, which will, in turn, impact the set goal, hitting the medium to long-term goal that interests your business stakeholders.

Putting the pieces together:



COVID-19 Survival Strategy Design Map

Our growth team designed this strategy map for you to implement now and maintain until the goal is achieved or becomes outdated.

Then, it will be time to find a new goal where to focus all team efforts.

So, let's first understand what is on your shoppers' minds nowadays when ordering online. Shoppers have expressed these concerns:

- a. sanitation during the product's manufacture and lifetime,
- b. your company's inventory restocking capabilities, and
- c. fulfillment center restrictions.

Based on the above, the main goal of your eCommerce must be to deliver a reliable and Coronavirus-safe ordering experience with your brand.

If your team focuses on creating a Coronavirus-safe shopping experience, your brand will be generating highly appreciated value to your shoppers.

Medium to long-term Goal/Vision - Sustain incoming revenue

Main Goal - Increase order placing through a reliable (Coronavirus-safe) shopping experience.

Leading Metrics:

- Order reliability perception
- Number of orders per month
- Number of new customers
- Number of resurrected customers
- Number of loyal customers



It's important to start adding tactics to the pipeline that will help you impact these leading metrics and begin walking the path of experimentation, which will save you from falling through the cracks of the Coronavirus pandemic effects.

22 TACTICS TO RESCUE YOUR ECOMMERCE

This is the time to get your team together and be creative. Everyone should be able to bring good tactics that are worth experimenting. Tactics should only be considered if there's an understanding that it will help directly impact one of the leading metrics.



Note: keep in mind these tactics were valid experiments at the time of the last update. It's possible that your competitors may have already implemented some of the following.

This not only means that you need to implement these tactics as a required baseline, but it's also an indication that you are already late in the process, and you need to take action right now!

METRIC TO IMPACT

Reliability on Ordering Experience

Here we are going to be looking at tactics aim to increase shoppers' confidence that ordering in our web store is reliable.

In this sense tactics will be aiming to provide shoppers with full transparency and peace of mind.

If you have strong supply line, talk about it. It's a compelling value proposition nowadays

Tactic 1 - Show that your store is SAFE and RELIABLE

Use your promo bar across the header to provide business updates around Coronavirus (i.e., *COVID-19 Update: Online orders processed as usual, read the latest updates!*) with a link to:

- Preventive measures taken to ensure warehouse location and fulfillment processes follow strict sanitation rules.
- Operations / business hours updates
- Order fulfillment restrictions updates
- Inventory replenishment updates

Tactic 2 - Reduce shopper anxiety when unboxing

Include inside the order package a printed educational flyer, detailing the packaging process and its different stages from your warehouse to the shoppers' door.

“The one who runs the most experiments, wins.”

Talk about the **cleaning and sanitation practices in fulfillment processes.**

Educate shoppers; most still are not sure about the possibilities of contracting the virus.

A study published last week in the New England Journal of Medicine found that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, was detectable for up to **2-3 days on plastic and stainless steel, up to 24 hours on cardboard**, up to 4 hours on copper, and up to 3 hours in aerosols.

One tactic we strongly recommend now is a **Qualitative Conversion Research**, where you can learn directly from your customers not only what are their **concerns** and **doubts**, but what is relevant now for them, how their needs have been altered. This is critical information to adjust your web store and campaigns.

Tactic 3 - Alleviate shopper by answering their most paralyzing concerns while shopping

Put in place, throughout your organization, a practice to collect all shoppers' concerns and doubts around the effect of Coronavirus in your products, ordering, and delivery.

Be transparent about how this pandemic effects are **limiting ordering capabilities.**

All these questions need to be collected and answered to website visitors throughout the shopping process.

Tactic 4 - Contactless delivery

If possible, arrange with shipping couriers to offer contactless delivery by leaving the package at the door, so customers don't have to face the delivery guy.

METRIC TO IMPACT

Purchases per month

Tactics here aim to specifically work on increasing the engagement level with the brand, including the frequency of engagement.

We are looking for smart ways to ease the accessibility, navigation, ordering, and support.

Tactic 5 - Adapt your mobile website as mobile device usage boosted with Coronavirus

Mobile shopping behavior is changing so much that China and Italy have already reported a 30% increase in mobile device usage in only one month.

Mobile device usage spiked (up to 50% in some markets according to Vodafone), so the chances that your buyers and potential buyers **land on your website from their mobile device are higher than ever.**

Tactic 6 - Filter product catalog by ships the same day.

As shopper anxiety and fears reign, help them find the products they need, and in the time they need it, faster. Include a Ships By filter to allow shoppers to narrow filter your entire catalog by shipment on Same Day, in 24 hours, in 48 hours, or more.

Tactic 7 - Estimated Delivery Time

As shopper anxiety keeps scaling, merchants need to serve better accurate information on how long it can take certain products to be shipped.

Make sure the estimated delivery time is added to every product detailed page, next to a "COVID-19 Delivery Update" to give shoppers clarity that delivery time is updated.

METRICS TO IMPACT

New Customers

Re-activated Customers

Loyal Customers

Tactic 8 - Turn walk-in shoppers into online customers

Let offline shoppers know that they can get their products online, and that you're prepared to respond to all of their COVID-19 concerns.

Tactic 9 - Reach out to your entire customer database

Send massive email campaigns communicating the new practices your business has put in place to provide Coronavirus-SAFE shopping experience online.

Tactic 10 - Re-target like crazy

Shopper's attention is going to be low, so you need to make yourself present. Remind shoppers that you can still provide the same products, in the same conditions and safely. **Re-target more** and expand the time window for the add as it will take more time.

Tactic 11 - Strategic Ads

Advertise to frustrated Amazon Prime shoppers. As Amazon is giving priority to household, sanitation, and medical goods, it's showing up to one-month delivery delays for non-essential products.

With the likes of Walmart and Target closing their physical stores, there's an opportunity to get some of that traffic to your website.

Google Shopping opportunity as Amazon drop ads spending.

YouTube traffic increased 10x in the past weeks. This means more than ever before, you have your target audience all together watching content related to your brand, e.g., March Madness with basketball fans.

Tactic 12 - Ads vs. Branding strategy

Evaluate if your product offering is relevant given the extraordinary circumstances. If you have a product that can sell well, go ahead with a product ad strategy. However, if it's not the right time for people to purchase your product, you should dive deep into a **branding campaign**, where your brand sends an emphatic message and transmits brand core values.

Tactic 13 - Go Digital

Select a set of relevant products that fall within cleaning, sanitation, first essentials, or in-door hobby/recreational products and allocate ads budget to market these.

In social, for example, CPC is dropping because many brands pull back in panic, while traffic is higher than ever. **Brands who are doing a mix of traditional non-digital and digital marketing campaigns** should reduce spending on traditional and use that budget for digital.

Also, digital allows you to correct and adjust the strategy, the messaging and the offer instantly.

“It’s now your team’s turn to come up with the next four tactics for each leading metric.”

Tactic 14 - Express love to your loyal customers

Loyal customers are the ones with higher Lifetime Value, and at the same time, the ones with the lowest conversion cost as you typically use email channel to keep selling them. Overcommunicate with them and try to keep them engaged. Be creative and give them something they'll highly appreciate.

Go beyond the most common ideas like financing options and extending payment terms. Think what's right for your customers now in these circumstances. For example, let them know they'll receive notification alerts when items they frequently purchase are running low on stock.

You are the one who knows your customers best and their needs. Think about what could work that will keep them engaged with your brand.

Tactic 15 - The 7-day plan

Meet with your team and study the data for the last seven days and learn how to adapt for the next week. Shopping behavior changes very rapidly, so you should plan week by week. Also, you should at least triple the number of experiments you make. The more you experiment, the more information you will have for the next period.

Tactic 16 - Diversify your supply chain

Many manufacturers switched to produce medical supplies to meet the high demands. Talk with your supplier, and try to have a full understanding of their current operation. Will there be changes in your lead times? Are they producing at full capacity? Are they fully staffed? What is their current production capacity for your product right now?

This will help you diversify and understand your supply chain. Think of looking for options. If you manufacture in China, don't limit yourself to China. Look across Asia, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, or wherever else you can find the same product. Diversification is more important than ever.

Tactic 17 - Don't stop looking for new customers

If businesses enter survival mode, they need customers more than ever. Without customers, they will disappear. It's important to keep looking for new customers. Fight that instinct to stop developing market. Its time to strategize ad spending. From your offer, find the one product that is most important for your customers right now, and focus your efforts on it.

Tactic 18 - Shift into information product business

Adapt to the times, and if shoppers cannot access your products in the stores, bring them into their homes. Think about how people are going to use your product and show them in action. Create graphic and video ads to show how customers can use them at home.

Tactic 19 - Forget short-term, go micro-term

Don't create campaigns that will take 6 weeks to see the result. Do tests that your team can produce in 2-3 days, put it out, and test it for two days. In two days, you will see if you can build it out or not. Don't focus on perfect, focus on getting something out there that's good enough just to test the response of the public

Tactic 20 - Keep your customers close

Pool your customers inside a private Facebook group, for example, to increase the retention rate, and the repeat customer rate month over month. You want them to rally around a mission that is very relevant to your product. You want them to have a common goal together because that keeps them engaged with your brand. It keeps your brand connected to what's happening right now, and it keeps your brand top of mind.

Tactic 21 - Don't forget about prices

You gotta look at your SKUs and see where they're coming in from a price perspective. Now there are more deal shoppers, so think of creating an offer that is more tailored and targeted to first time buyers into your eCommerce store. It's going to have a massive impact over time because you can start increasing LTV as you sell them other products through your eCommerce.

Tactic 22 - Identify your levers

Understand the levers that you can pull at any given time. Your levers in eCommerce are, for example, your email list, your cost per acquisition of new customers, and the conversion rate on your website.

You need to analyze those different levers. When you understand them, you'll learn what you can actually control now and change now. For example, use email to offer instant discounts to increase revenue and cash flow. Or add a spin-the-wheel feature to increase conversion rates.

Find out which area of your business you need to focus this week and work on optimizing. Keep in mind that recessions last from 12 to 18 months, so you need to have—or raise—enough capital to sustain your business during this period.

Tactic 23 - Stand out from the crowd

Now that everyone is bringing up COVID-19, a message from the founder helps you stand out from the massive amount of email marketing campaigns being sent out. Personalization is crucial. Highlight the team. Make it personal.

TRACKING PERFORMANCE

As tactics are being implemented and tests conducted, the next step is to closely look into how the leading metrics are performing.

Some leading metrics can be easily pulled from Google Analytics, or other similar tools. However, there are other metrics, such as "Ordering reliability perception," that require the implementation of surveys or polls to collect shoppers' perceptions to be able to score results.

Measuring discipline is key to not only understand if you succeed or fail, but also to react fast and pivot your strategy as soon as you don't see the expected results.

Remember that the key is focusing on the leading metrics. If these are improving, then the main goal and the mid-long term goal/vision will follow automatically.

We hope this reading will help you take the appropriate action fast, get smarter on your strategy and, as a result, be able to overcome the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we mentioned before, we strongly believe that this strategy framework will also arm you with the tools and mindset to seek for growth, even in times of recession. The process gets richer when you and your team sit together to come up with innovative, creative and impactful tactics.

If you need help implementing a growth strategy, please reach out to our team for a free of charge strategy session.