

A Quick Reference Guide

In times of great uncertainty, the most critical skill is to be able to adapt as conditions change. This is a kind of ambidexterity: focusing on surviving the current crisis while also building toward thriving in a post-COVID-19 future.

Most businesses have focused on communicating safety measures to consumers to reassure them that their products and services are safe. This information will need to remain accessible to consumers for the foreseeable future. However, as the economy begins to reopen, businesses should shift their focus to engaging with consumers and keeping their brands top-of-mind.

The following quick reference guide was developed in partnership with several chamber member ad agencies. It is meant to be a starting point to help businesses begin to formulate what and how they communicate their relaunch message. The chamber thanks Cox Minshall Winans, Mangan Holcomb Partners & Team SI, Rock City Digital, Sells Agency and Stone Ward for lending their expertise to this piece.



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What is THE NEW NORMAL



Maintaining a positive voice, engaging consumers with relevant content and keeping your customers informed of how your business is adapting to the current situation are the most important things businesses can do to preserve and grow their customer base.

Focus on your brand – your values, mission and purpose – and the things your business has to offer to consumers right now. It is likely that consumers 65+ will be more cautious than other younger demographics, and therefore, your business may need to adapt to better serve your customer base. Evaluate whether or not your target demographic has shifted or if there are special measures you may need to take to reach certain demographics.

The coronavirus has forced us to utilize digital technology at a higher rate than ever before. For example, digital grocery shopping grew by 23% in March, and experts predict this rise in e-commerce will have lasting effects. Video conferencing as well has surged in popularity as isolated friends and families attempt to stay connected through digital.

What does this mean for brick and mortars? It means your physical foot traffic may come back but not at the rates you've been used to. This isn't surprising, as online sales have seen large year-over-year growth, while brick and mortar sales rates haven't been nearly as high. That said, the coronavirus's effect may act as a pressure cooker, speeding up consumers' propensity for online shopping.



U.S. online sales of consumer packaged goods – the kinds of items typically sold in grocery stores – **grew 56%** for the one week ending April 18, compared to the same period a year earlier.

Source: Nielsen and Rakuten Intelligence

Relaunch: A Quick Reference Guide

THE NEW NORMAL

Post-COVID-19 Trends

• Remote work and video conferencing Employers are seeing remote work as a viable option for much of their staff. In the past, if you joined a conference via video, you were thought of as "mailing it in." Now it's become an accepted form of participation. Business travel will be reduced with a resulting reduction in travel budgets.

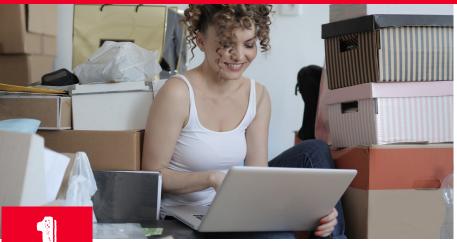
• Digital migration picks up speed COVID-19 has accelerated the digital change that was already underway. What some organizations resisted for a decade is now core to survival and innovation. It is highly unlikely companies will try to return to what worked prior to the pandemic.

The death of the open office

Research has shown that people in open offices take nearly two-thirds more sick leave and report greater unhappiness, more stress, and less productivity than those with more privacy. The experience with COVID-19 will make people more aware of the danger of working in shoulder-to-shoulder open offices where it is easy for viruses to spread.

Lasting impacts on manufacturing Moving forward, factories and supply chains will require, and businesses will mandate, much more resilient manufacturing through nearshoring and even onshoring, full automation and softwarebased management.

Brick and mortar diversification COVID-19 isn't the end of brick-and-mortar stores — they're vital to our communities and our economy — but the way they operate will change. This crisis will force small businesses that have historically relied on foot traffic as their main source of income to develop alternative revenue streams so they can weather the next major event.



Lean into digital

Brick and mortar retailers will need to lean in heavily on digital to create an omnichannel customer experience. While no one is suggesting keeping your doors closed, you would be wise to invest more into your online presence, ensuring a robust digital experience that easily translates to the physical, in-store sales experience. Perhaps you can experiment with live streaming video platforms to discuss new products, promotions and deals, or provide extra value through educational talks, trainings and tips.



The in-store experience may need to adapt and evolve as well. Grocery stores could host cooking classes, tasting sessions or party planning seminars. Hardware stores could host DIY classes and gardening activities. Even restaurants can invite consumers to try new menu items and wine selections during private events, or completely rethink how food is consumed (food trucks, anyone?).

Adapt and change has always been the nature of business, and the tools for success are within reach.

Digital technology has always been an unstoppable locomotive pushing consumer behaviors and preferences into new territories. But this unprecedented time has acted as a nuclear reactor providing a surge of speed that's moving us forward faster than we expected. But it doesn't have to throw local businesses off the tracks. Adapt and change has always been the nature of business, and the tools for success are within reach.





Social distancing is here to stay for the foreseeable future. Health and safety precautions for businesses will likely remain in place for some time, and there may be others that should be instituted as in-person contact resumes.

The **CDC** and the **Arkansas Department of Health** both offer specific guidelines for employers and businesses. Here are some practical safety measures for retail stores and restaurants to consider during their reopening:

- Where possible, provide a hygienic or touchless shopping or dining experience:
 - Maintain strict cleaning regimes for all premises
 - Have hand sanitizer, tissues and no-touch trash cans accessible to customers
 - Utilize touchless POS or mobile payment systems
 - Spread tables further apart
 - Use disposable paper menus
 - Remove communal items from tables and opt for single use items or limited use of shared items that are sanitized between uses



A modeling study on COVID-19 warns that intermittent periods of social distancing may need to persist into 2022 in the United States to keep the surge of people severely sickened by the virus from overwhelming the health care system.

Continued next page Source: Science Magazine

SAFETY FIRST

Social Distancing on the Job

Consider establishing policies and practices for social distancing at your place of business. Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining a distance of six feet from others when possible (e.g., break rooms and cafeterias). Strategies that businesses could use include:

- Implementing flexible work sites
 Consider allowing employees to work
 remotely
- Implementing flexible work hours Staggered shifts reduce the number of people commuting and in the office
- Increasing physical space between employees and customers
 Consider drive-through options, curbside service, partitions
- Implementing flexible meeting and travel options

Postpone or cancel non-essential meetings and events or transition to virtual

Deliver services remotely
 Provide services via phone or internet

There has been a surge in demand for home food delivery with more and more people staying indoors and practicing social distancing. Delivery services like Grubhub, Postmates and UberEats are all experiencing increased demand for their services and have taken steps like offering contactless delivery to protect customers and delivery drivers.

Source: Cision

CDC and the Arkansas Department of Health Guidelines, continued

- Limit the number of customers in store or attending events, and maintain a distance of six feet between individuals where possible
- Employees who have symptoms (i.e., fever, cough or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home
- Maintain or implement health and safety guidelines for your employees, some of which might include wearing masks or gloves, thorough handwashing, daily temperature checks, sick leave policies or guidelines, and potentially how to handle a customer who appears ill
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand hygiene

Learn more at CDC.gov



How should I adapt my PR AND MESSAGING



As the state reopens and businesses are planning their reopening strategy, strategic communications plays an important role.

In assessing your organization's communications plan, has your communications strategy changed since COVID-19? How is it changing now that the state is reopening? Is your message relevant? Are you communicating to the right audiences and using the correct channels? Whether your organization needs crisis communications support or PR guidance to communicate effectively and break through the clutter, having an agile PR strategy is critical.

Utilize, boost social media messaging

Customers need to know you're open for business and that you're continuing to follow CDC guidelines for their safety when they visit your business. Appeal to customers by showcasing your company's products, services or special offers with an invitation to visit. Social media boosting is an inexpensive way to further promote your messages.

Be mindful of the environment

Customers and employees will pay attention to the business environment and practices. Have employees wear protective gear and place visible messaging around the business to remind employees and customers of best practices. Continued precautions will help encourage those who are stepping back out, while also helping the community reduce spread of the virus. Facebook saw a 70% increase in usage during the month of March.

Source: eMarketer

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PR AND MESSAGING

The chamber is here to help!



If you're reopening, running a special sale or offering new services, make a Facebook post and tag the chamber so we can share your post and help spread the word!



If your business is reopening after being forced to close due to the pandemic, let us know the date, time and details of your reopening so we can add you to a special reopening page on our website. Send your information to chamber@littlerockchamber.com.

Communicate what HASN'T changed

Think about the reasons that your customers love your business. What creates loyalty among your visitors? Whatever comes to mind is something that your consumers value about your business. Share updates from company leadership about how those things are not changing.

Strategic messaging

Communicate your continued safety precautions, but also deliver messaging that will help drive customers back to your business. That may include special promotions, an opportunity to contribute to a local nonprofit or other ideas. Continue to cater services to customers who may not be ready to step out yet (curbside pick-up, etc.) and communicate those options.

Inspire with creativity

Rekindle an affinity for your business, products or services by creatively connecting with customers through videos, community service, information sessions, or in-house or virtual events. Refamiliarize customers about you, your company, mission or a community partner. Share success stories and focus on the positives to encourage customers as they return to a daily routine.

Pursue media opportunities

Media will cover stories on how companies are creatively welcoming customers back to their business, so reach out to editors prior to events your business may host and tag appropriate media outlets in social posts. What is your reopening story and how is it different from others who are also reopening? In order to break through the clutter, it's important to be in touch with what audiences are discussing in the news and via social media.

Monitor developments in the community

Until the pandemic has completely subsided, it is critical to monitor developments in the community so your business can respond appropriately. This will help your company maintain the trust of your customers as they witness your business taking the appropriate steps in the interest of customers' health and safety.

Issue a press release

If you cannot communicate the message through your social media network, then do so in a news release. The key here is to find a way to appropriately keep your brand in the public's eye. News releases walk a tightrope between being helpful and self-promotional, but if your message is purposeful, newsworthy and unique, then you're okay to distribute your message this way.

Hire a pro

When in doubt, hire a PR firm that is trained in crisis communications. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when dealing with a crisis. But remember, you're not in this alone. Check out our list on pg. 16.

PR AND MESSAGING

Top tips for getting the news about your reopening IN the news

Share your news in advance

Media outlets need a heads up. Email or call the main news desk before you reopen your business. This will help ensure the information makes it into the media outlet's daily planner. It's also best to make a follow-up call the morning of the reopening event. Contact information for local media outlets can be found on the individual websites.

For restaurant openings, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* has a list for the open/closed status of local restaurants here: **arkansasonline. com/restaurantchanges**, and it will cover stories regarding restaurants or businesses where there's a lot of public interest. Business owners are welcome to contact the newspaper at news@ arkansasonline.com and webreleases@arkansasonline.com. These are the emails primarily used for news tips to the general news team and breaking news team, respectively. The business team can be reached at business@arkansasonline. com. Newspaper, television and radio teams are also accessible through Facebook and Twitter.

Support your reopening story with video and photos

Most media outlets are still trying to video or photograph everything themselves, but when all the local businesses start opening up, that will be impossible. Decide the best way to share good video, as it will trump a good picture to make it into television coverage. Photographs can still be shared with television stations, as they work well for social media. You can use these links to share



still images with KARK/KLRT karkpics@nexstar. tv or KLRT klrtpics@nexstar.tv, and go directly to additional media outlet websites to do the same.

For daily online/print media, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* has a new policy for photographs taken outside the newspaper's staff. The copyright owner must give written permission to publish images, so include a notation that "permission is granted for publication" when pictures are emailed. Use a video or image transfer service such as WeTransfer, Dropbox or Google Images for large files.

Be specific regarding details

Reopening details or event information should be specific regarding days and times. The first places that open up with full health and local government approval will likely get the most coverage.

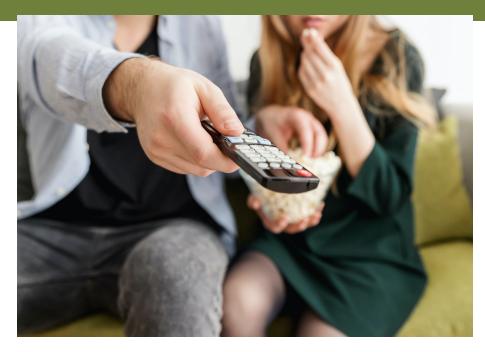
Make some blog posts

Remember people are on their phones more than normal, which means your brand should be pushing content out. Now is the time to share those uplifting, inspirational stories. How are you helping your community? Are any of your employees volunteering in meaningful ways? These are golden opportunities just waiting to be shared with your followers.

Reach out to your influencers

This can be a cost-effective and efficient way to share updates to your adjusted operations. Utilize influencers in your area to share reopening information and customer win-back promotions.

Traditional channels ADVERTISING ARKETING



From a paid media and advertising perspective, we are seeing some interesting changes in media consumption due to COVID-19.

One of the most notable changes is that connected TV viewership has increased as an affordable option for those looking for a cost-efficient cable alternative. There has also been a rise in social media consumption and time spent on social media as people are home more often and filling time on their newsfeeds.

COVID-19 has caused a ripple effect in every industry, including advertising, so it's hard to predict what impacts will become chronic or acute post-pandemic, but our best advice is to determine two things for the remainder of the year: your budget and your goals. No doubt the effects of COVID could have changed those two things from where you started earlier this year, so reevaluating and redefining those two elements can help you determine where you should be in paid media.

Before you dive into tactics, you need to make sure you are allocating enough marketing dollars to make a difference. A quick rule of thumb across all industries is to allocate 12-20% of your overall gross revenue for newer companies and 5-12% for established companies. Work with your media partners to determine the platforms and tactics you should use to achieve your goals. Our best advice is to determine two things for the remainder of the year: your budget and your goals.

TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

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Outdoor advertising generates efficient pricing

- Many small business owners think of outdoor as a space reserved only for bigger budgets, but outdoor offers some quality board placements for fair pricing especially when you factor in cost-per-thousand pricing, or how much it costs to reach 1,000 of a particular audience. Of all media, outdoor typically is the cheapest media option when analyzing CPM, coming in at an average of \$2. To compare, television and radio average around \$15-\$40.
- Do not be worried about not being creative; outdoor companies have graphic artists on staff that can help design and launch your idea quickly. Another tactic is to leverage digital boards, which typically come with lower monthly pricing and zero production costs.
- You will be advertising in a competitive environment when stores reopen. Don't lead with a generic marketing message; lead with a limited time offer/promotion/discount that will spark intrigue and want from your prospective audiences.

Radio

Radio – niche, nimble and effective

- Look into radio for your marketing comeback as radio is proven to drive in-store traffic based on generating effective frequency. When you select your station, make sure you have enough dollars allocated to reach your audience at a minimum of seven times per four-week period. Don't worry, your station representative can help you with this data and allocation.
- Be smart within your radio dollars. For restaurants, only market within the lunch and dinner time hours as this is when audiences are actively thinking about their upcoming purchase decisions.
 For retailers, focus your radio messaging on your historic peak hours only.

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Utilize the sight, sound and motion of television

- For businesses with larger marketing dollars and a larger marketing radius, you might start with television as television has been proven to drive the highest awareness and engagement across all media types.
- For businesses with larger budgets and industries where people will drive 40+ miles or can shop online, start with broadcast as this has the largest reach of all television strategies and can be accessed to even those who have cut cable.
- For business with smaller budgets and industries that are confined to a 10-mile radius, start with cable, and only purchase cable zones that align with your marketing area.
- As a basic strategy, regardless of if you selected broadcast or cable (or both!), make sure you're reaching at least 40% of your audience with a minimum frequency of three times per four-week period or you might not have enough dollars to push through the marketing noise of your competition.

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TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

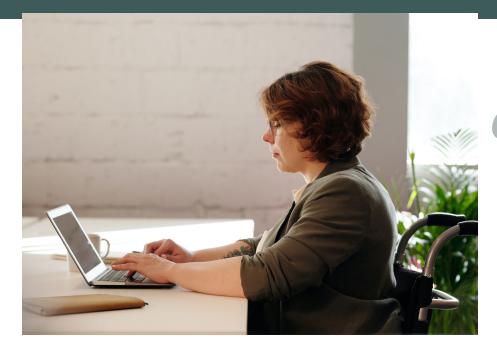


And don't forget direct mail

- If your customers are consumers and not businesses, direct mail is still a great way to reach them. When setting up your mail piece, consider how it can actually help people. If you have a product or service that will help prospects during the pandemic, highlight that – without capitalizing on COVID-19. If not, then find a way for the mail piece to educate, entertain or inspire prospects into action.
- Be sure to show sincere empathy for what your customers are going through. Times are tough and you don't want to come across as insensitive. Consider creating direct mail that conveys optimism, hope and humanity. Creating a mail campaign with a positive message and needed products, services or information will be well received.
- Avoid content or images that invoke touching or physical closeness.
- It also is important to consider your list. There may be people on your list who are better targets to reach out to than others right now. Segment them out, and send only to them. This is not the time for a one-size-fits-all campaign. Sensitivity and relevancy really matter right now. The best direct mail is sending the right offer to the right person at the right time.



Digital channels ADVERTISIN COM ARKETING



Your website is one of your key channels for crisis communication.

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Make your website a great source of COVID-19 information

- Your website is one of your key channels for crisis communication. Create a new page or section of your site to let your customers know whether you're open and if your hours have changed, how products, services and delivery times may have been affected, the steps you're taking to ensure their safety and more. This new page or starting page of a new section should have an unchanging and memorable URL. By keeping the URL of your key page consistent:
 - You won't need to change your alert bar each time you post an update
 - Visitors can bookmark that page to quickly find it
 - Search engines will know that is the key page on your site for information about the pandemic, which is good for SEO
- This new information should be easily accessible from your homepage. Make sure it's one of the first things visitors to your site will see by placing it near the top and using bold fonts and colors.
- Because your homepage is the starting point for only a portion of your site visitors, your site header is another place to push information about COVID-19 so that every person that goes to your site can quickly find the latest information about the pandemic and how it relates to you. Add a COVID-19 link to your main navigation or add a site-wide alert bar that sits above the navigation.

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Little Rock Regional Chamber

DIGITAL ADVERTISING



Paid search captures search intent

- Paid search has been proven to be one of the most effective and efficient forms of marketing for all industries and sizes as it only serves marketing to those actively looking for your product, and unlike most forms of marketing, you only pay when someone clicks to your website or calls.
- For those who are brand new to paid search, start with Google Smart Campaigns. Unlike traditional Google Ads with ultra-complicated levers and algorithms, Google Smart Campaigns makes it very simple for a business owner to set-up and launch.

Lead your comeback with social media

- Each business owner needs to make paid social media their first priority for driving awareness and traffic to their location.
 - To start, focus on Facebook as this platform has the largest reach of all audiences, especially those with the highest disposable income. While posting on your page (organic) is a great strategy, you have to back some of those posts by marketing dollars as organic posting typically only reaches around 3% of your audience – not enough to make a quick difference.
 - Make sure your business is utilizing geographic and demographic targeting to ensure you are not wasting dollars. For most businesses, an average customer typically shops/buys within a 10-mile radius.
 - You will be competing within a very competitive space as every retailer will be trying to gain market share when doors reopen, and because of this, you need your messaging to stand out. Data shows that giveaways, promotions or discounts are the best at driving in-store traffic – think about something you can offer your customer that will drive them in your store that week.
- Continue to provide only key information. Consumers have been bombarded with communication from brands and companies hoping to maintain a relationship with them during COVID-19. Be sensitive to that fact and avoid posting unnecessary communications too soon. As things gradually return to normal, provide clear and relevant social media updates as necessary. Make sure your followers are aware of any changes to your operating hours, curbside pickup, how many customers can be in your retail location at a time, etc.
- Maintain sensitivity on social media. Remember that your customers are real people who may have been impacted on a personal level by the pandemic. Maintain a sense of empathy when you're considering how to communicate ideas on your social media channels.
- Share daily specials and deals. Share about a daily happy hour special or special "Welcome Back!" menu to encourage customers to come celebrate the reopening of your restaurant or bar.

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DIGITAL ADVERTISING

- Promote structure and cleanliness. Regularly post updates on social media sharing specifics about how you're maintaining cleanliness standards in your business. Customers will feel calmer entering your business if they have reassurance about the exact processes you're taking to keep things clean. Consider posting Facebook or Instagram live video updates to keep customers posted on this changing situation. For example, feature your touchless self-checkout or the hand sanitizer stations located around your business.
- Communicate what hasn't changed. Think about the reasons that your customers love your business. What is it about your business that creates loyalty among visitors? Whatever comes to mind is something that your consumers value about your business. Share updates from company leadership about how those things are not changing. For example, if your customers value your great customer service, share how that has remained unchanged in the midst of the pandemic. If your wonderful employees are what makes your business really shine, share employee spotlights as well as information about how you're continuing to keep your team safe.
- Offer entertainment. Social deprivation has hit many people hard. When it's safe to do so, consider having live music or a trivia night at your restaurant or bar to encourage consumers to come enjoy the company of others (even if from a safe distance). If you continue to offer social distancing between tables, communicate that clearly to ease the fears of your more cautious customers. When it's safe, utilize the 'Events' feature on Facebook. Create and boost an Event on your page to increase awareness and let people know your in-store experience is back.
- Boost activity with a giveaway. Giveaways on social media are a great way to encourage engagement from followers and even develop new, loyal customers. Give away a gift card or another prize as a celebration of your reopening. This will grab attention of local customers, help grow your following and will let people know you're open for business again.

Social Media Quick Tips *Five things you should be doing right now*

Lean into your clients' pain points

Provide value by identifying your client's pain points and providing a solution. Start by identifying what problem your goods or services solve, then outline how you'd like to communicate that to your audience.

Post at the optimal time

Go to your Facebook Business Manager page, click Insights at the top, click Posts on left-hand side of the page, then check the chart to see the times your followers see your posts the most and start posting during that time.

Let others know how they can support you

Make sure your followers and customers know what you need from them. Encourage your customers to shop online, sign up for your e-newsletter, leave you a Facebook review, utilize curbside services or donate to a specific organization.

Create a call to action

Determine what you want your followers to do when they see your posts. If you'd like your followers to leave a comment, your call to action may be, "leave a comment!" to generate some engagement. If you'd like for them to call your store or visit your website, leave clear directions on how to do so.

Don't go dark

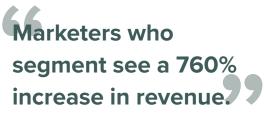
Many businesses have determined that they don't know what to say and resolve to say nothing at all. The reality is that we're all living in this new normal! Saying nothing at all or continuing with business as usual can come across as unconcerned or tone-deaf.

DIGITAL ADVERTISING



Plan your email campaigns

- The quickest and easiest way to communicate with your existing customers is through email. You have a direct line of communication through their in-box. Almost every consumer checks their email once a day, with more than half checking their in-box 10 times a day. More importantly still, email marketing, when done right, can see huge returns. Studies show that for every dollar you spend on email marketing, you'll see \$43 in returns. As you prepare to reopen your business, reevaluating your email strategy is paramount.
- If you're still sending out a single email to your entire subscriber database, now's the time to mature your efforts. When you segment your subscribers into distinct, relevant groups, you can craft personalized messages that consumers will respond to. Marketers who segment see a 760% increase in revenue, according to Campaign Monitor.
 - Remove unengaged users. If you have subscribers who haven't opened an email in over a year, send them a "Still Interested" email. If they still don't engage, remove them. Focus your efforts on subscribers who want to hear from you.



- Define three to five types of buyers. Depending on your industry, you'll have three to five types of buyers who engage with your business. Define them based on similar attributes each type shares, such as age, ZIP code, types of purchases, etc. Next, start grouping your subscribers into these cohorts using your POS or CRM data. Don't have that data? No problem. Oftentimes, subscribers will tell you this information through surveys or questionnaires. You can offer discounts or promotions in exchange, or simply promise better email communication in the future.
- If your email marketing in the past has been sporadic or practically nonexistent, it's time to ramp it up. Your competitors will all fight for exposure once the city reopens. The businesses with the best communication strategies today will see strong returns later.
- And don't be afraid to send multiple emails per week. The average open rate for emails is around 20%, meaning only one-in-five of your subscribers will see any given email you send. Make sure your message is relevant and full of quality content and that you're sending emails based on your segments. Coordinate your messaging to ensure the content you're sending via email is relevant and complements the content in social.

Special thanks to OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Little Rock Regional Chamber thanks our agency partners who graciously contributed their expertise to this piece.



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For more information on COVID-19 business response and resources, please visit littlerockchamber.com/covid19.



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