



BACK TO BUSINESS PLAYBOOK

COX
MEDIA

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented disruption to the American economy. Many small businesses have been forced to either adapt their business models almost overnight, or close their doors entirely and wait for the opportunity to open up and return to normal operations.

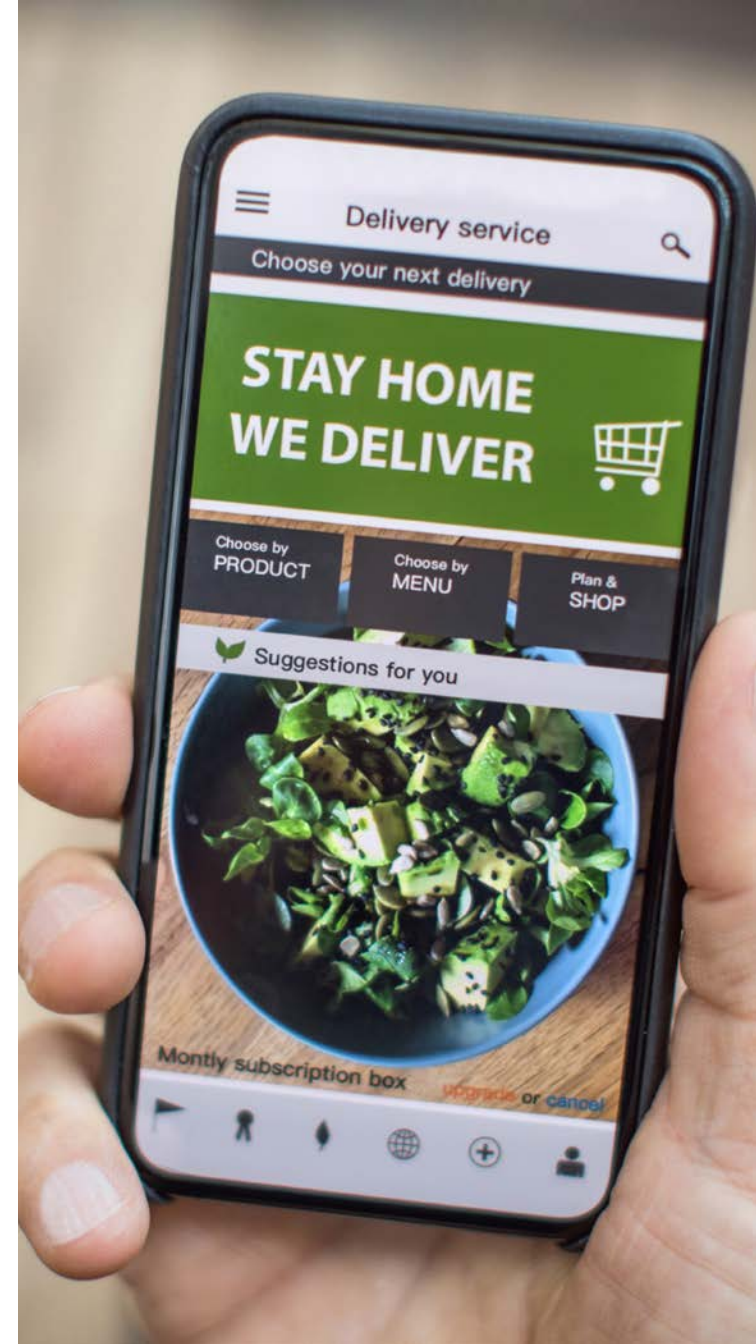
As cities and states relax their restrictions on businesses, many companies now find themselves in various stages of getting back to business. But reopening your business involves embracing a new normal: most companies must account for new regulations and restrictions on how they operate and interact with customers. And customers bring their own set of expectations to any business, especially when it comes to supporting social distancing and ensuring safety for both customers and employees.



INTRODUCTION

Businesses are responding by transforming their operations to meet these new guidelines and needs. Digital apps are being used to support mobile ordering; contact-free delivery is being offered by restaurants as well as retail businesses; DIY services and product packages are being offered for everything from cloth masks to home improvement projects; and interior business layouts are being redesigned to facilitate social distancing and encourage the flow of one-way traffic to limit close encounters among customers.

Whether you're reopening your business, recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, or are trying to reimagine a new, better way of doing business in a changed world, a crucial key to success will be communicating this new approach to your customer base.



Any marketing strategy needs to account for the way **consumer media consumption has changed** since the start of the pandemic: Sixty percent of U.S. consumers say they're watching more live TV since during the pandemic. A similar number say they're doing more streaming. Overall, 87 percent of U.S. residents say they're consuming more content overall than they were before the pandemic. And 74 percent of consumers say they're streaming more music, and plan to maintain that media consumption level even once the pandemic is over.



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What to Expect in this Playbook

As your business plans its comeback, your marketing strategy needs to account for how your audience has changed, both in terms in what they value from a business, and when choosing the advertising channels to reach those consumers. In this guide, we outline the strategic insights you need to connect with your customers as you reopen, and beyond. The playbook is divided into three chapters, each one addressing a specific stage of getting "back to business." Then, we tie it all together with how our team of experts is here to help you do just that. To get started, review the stages below and consider which is most fitting for the current state of your business:

REOPEN

You are considering how and when to open your doors in response to the various public health government restrictions.

RECOVER

You have been open or have implemented business operation changes for about 30 days or less and you are starting to adjust to what a "new normal" looks like for your business, your customers and your employees. Or, if you have stayed open throughout this time, you are putting into place new policies and changing elements of how your business operates for the foreseeable future.

REIMAGINE

You have been open or have implemented business operation changes for more than 30 days and are considering more long-term plans for your business. You are now focused on being proactive for the future.

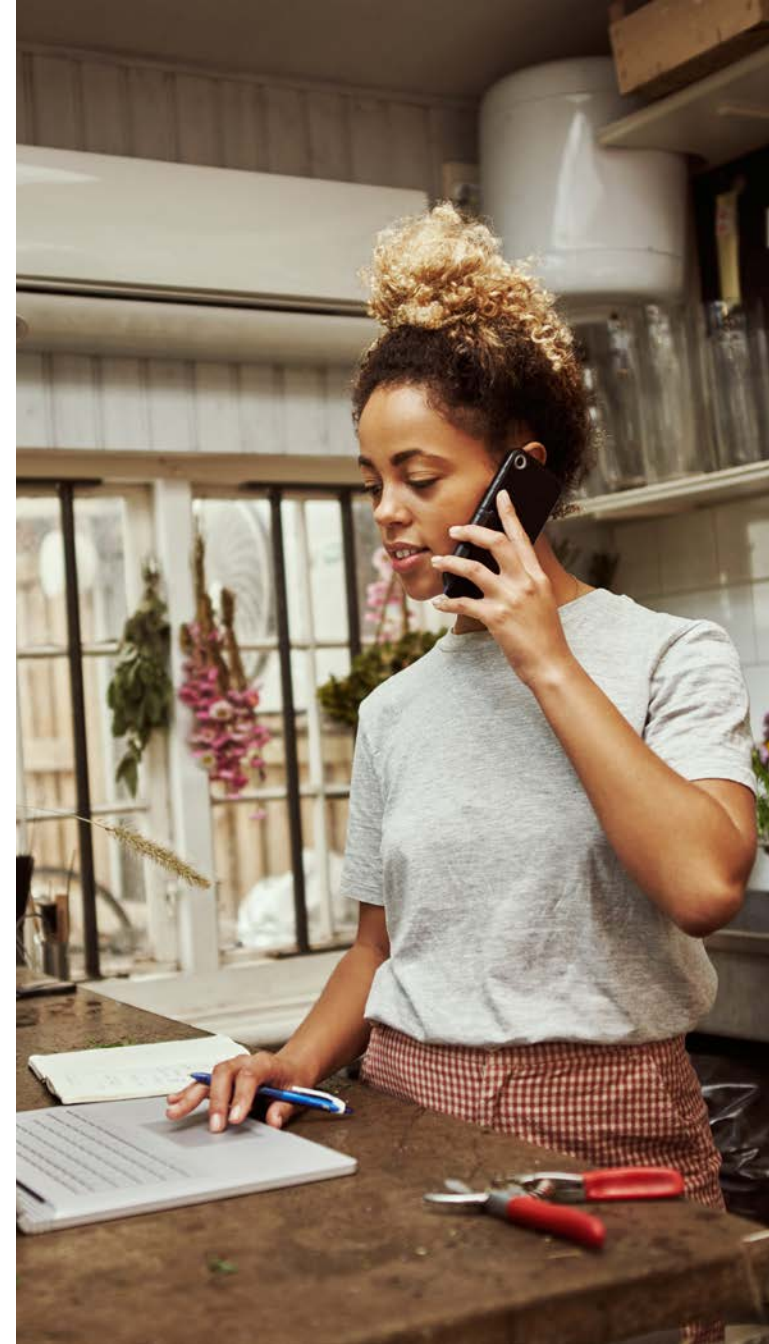
As your business moves through each stage, there are three important factors to keep in mind:

Empathy: Keep your customers and what they may have experienced over the past few months at the forefront of everything you are doing. This has been a challenging time for many, so think about things from their varying perspectives and try to approach a connection with them as human-to-human instead of business-to-consumer.

Agility: The world is rapidly changing – be ready to change with it. The more flexible you can be with your marketing approach and your messaging, the better.

Communication: Staying connected is more important than ever, and while the “right” way to do so looks a little different from business to business, having a solid and thoughtful communications strategy is vital for your success.

Now let's get back to business...



If you're faced with the reopening stage, it means you haven't reopened your doors to customers yet—but you're working on a plan that accounts for government restrictions and customer concerns. **You might also be looking to develop new policies or business elements that permanently change the customer experience at your business, even after the pandemic has passed.**

The reopening process must address practical matters of how your business plans to adapt its operations. As you solve these problems on the operations side, your changes also need to be reflected in your business advertising.



REOPEN

General Messaging

As you plan your reopening, here are some ideas and suggestions to craft effective ad messaging:

We're open and COVID-compliant. Even as restrictions ease, businesses are opening at different rates. It's important to use advertising channels to announce your reopening, and to highlight the changes you've implemented to meet COVID regulations. Examples include no-contact pickup, contactless payments, socially distanced store layouts, drive-up services, and any other relevant changes to your operations.

Customer safety is our top priority. Your customers will have varying levels of anxiety regarding safety in public spaces. It's important to empathize with those concerns and address them in your advertisements. You can also highlight the protective measures used to care for your employees—customers care about their safety, too.

We're local. Don't forget to emphasize that you're a locally owned business. Seventy-five percent of U.S. consumers plan to back their local businesses as they start to reopen. Use your advertising to help them support your business.



Marketing Tips

As you approach your reopening, take these other steps to facilitate a smooth return:

Update your online profiles. Social media accounts, Yelp, Google Business listings and other online profiles need to be updated with important information, including your operating hours, whether reservations are required, whether you take cash payments, etc.

Lean on social media to quickly communicate new information.

As new services or other changes are made to your business, social media is your best outlet for spreading the word. Use these communication tools, along with email newsletters, to quickly push out important messages.

Showcase business changes on social media. Photos, video, and behind-the-scenes content can help wary customers get familiar with your business practices. This will be crucial to convincing them to visit your establishment.



Use existing marketing channels to advertise job openings. Millions of Americans are currently looking for a job, which means businesses are likely to find a large pool of applicants for any job they post. Email newsletters, websites and social media—especially LinkedIn, if you're a B2B business—can help you reach relevant job-seekers who are local to your area and already familiar with your business.

Add banners or other simple modifications to existing ad assets. Display ads and other content could be customized to serve your current needs. In some cases, this could save you the cost of creating entirely new advertising assets.



Behind-the-scenes social media content can help wary customers get familiar with your business practices.

Communication Corner

Emphasize solidarity with your local customers, as well as your presence as a local business. Highlight compliance and other safety measures being taken as you reopen.

Consider the Following:

If you're already open, with changes to your business:

- What changes have you made to stay open? (Implementation of PPE, amount of customers allowed in, digital reservations, etc.)
- How difficult has it been to become compliant with current state/CDC guidelines?
- How are these changes being communicated to your customers?
- How will COVID impact inventory or current product offerings?
- What quality of your business are you not sacrificing through these changes? (taste, quality, etc.)
- What quality have you had to sacrifice due to these changes?
- What communications have you had to change since COVID?
- Is your business aiding in any COVID efforts that your customers should know about?

If you're closed, but planning to reopen:

- Are any / which of your competitors are open?
 - If yes:** How are you getting ahead of them in conversations with your customers?
 - If no:** Take advantage of that fact and get in front of the customers first. People are ready to get outside and experience local businesses again.
- How are your competitors advertising?
- How have your competitors made similar changes?

How We Can Help

As your trusted advertising partner, we can help you target the right channels to deliver awareness-level content to a large, local audience—including existing customers and potential new customers. We will **set channel and campaign-specific budgets to help you maximize your ROI** for these campaigns, and we will help develop the creative assets needed to deliver your messaging and drive engagement with your brand.

Contact us to learn more [1.855.755.2691](tel:1.855.755.2691)

In this stage of getting back to business, your business has been "reopened," at least in some capacity, for about 30 days. **At this point, you are starting to adjust to what your "new normal" might look like for both customers and employees, as well as your business model as a whole.** Or, you have kept your doors open throughout this time, but are rethinking the way your business operates in alignment with current events.

Through interactions with your customers, you have a better sense of what they want and need from your business, and you're reading to apply those lessons to grow your business even further.



RECOVER

General Messaging

For a reopened business looking to advance its recovery, messaging should be focused on the continued changes and upgrades being made to its customer experience:

You spoke. We listened. This messaging can be used to highlight many different changes, from new products or services offered, to new protocols for your business operations. Regardless of the changes being highlighted, this approach demonstrates that your business is ready and willing to take customer feedback—which helps strengthen trust between you and your customers.

Have we got a deal for you! Work new incentives and sales back into your advertising rotation. Start small with mobile, social media, and display ads. Monitor campaign performance carefully to determine whether your customers are responding to this approach.

Our products or services just got better. Revealing a new product line, or expanding your hours or service area? This messaging helps expand the appeal and relevance of your business to a local audience.



Marketing Tips

Reconsider how you define your local audience. Travel restrictions, staggered business reopenings and increased consumer unease can change how you target local consumers, at least in the short term. If you're one of the first businesses in your vertical to open in your local area, for example, you may also use this opportunity to target consumers in neighboring regions where your competitors haven't opened up. Geotargeting uses location data to target specific territory, including ZIP codes and proximity to your business, across all of your digital campaigns.

Pay close attention to competitor strategies. If your competitors are open for business, pay attention to the strategies, messaging, and business changes they're using to engage their local audience. During this period of local business disruption, market share is up for grabs. Stay agile with your messaging by monitoring the success of other businesses.



Highlight business changes that might appeal to new customers. Even as business restrictions ease, automotive shops may choose to continue offering pick-up and drop-off services for customers who may be reluctant to leave their home, or who might not want to make the commute to that business location. As your business services and features evolve, consider how these offerings can help you broaden your customer base without losing your core clientele.

Use digital surveys and other online tools to gather customer feedback. Effective recovery and revisioning of your business requires input from your customers. Common drop-boxes aren't a reliable option right now. Lean into digital tools that can quickly collect feedback to help you guide these important business decisions.

Fine-tune remarketing campaigns to address common customer concerns. Remarketing must be able to implement quick shifts in messaging that help your business address the various concerns and needs your customers may be dealing with. A digital advertising partner can help you leverage data-driven insights to build remarketing campaigns that are responsive to evolving customer preferences, helping you boost your ROI.



Quick shifts in messaging help your business adapt to customer concerns.

Communication Corner

Update consumers on your progress and changes as business operations resume. This includes new safety protocols added since reopening, as well as changes to your products or services offered. Use sales messaging in moderation—keep the focus on serving customers and the community.

Consider the Following:

- How has your local landscape of competitors changed? Have some of them closed or delayed reopening, creating a new market opportunity?
- How have the needs of your existing customer base changed?
- How has the makeup of your customer base changed? What new demographics are showing an increased interest in your business, and why?
- What kind of feedback have you received on your initial business reopening? What do customers appreciate, and what pain points are they facing?
- How has the profile of your revenue activities changed? Are your ad budgets aligned with these changes?

How We Can Help

Our team of experts will use analytics to monitor campaign performance as you reopen, and **implement strategic changes based on the changing business landscape**. This may include shifting ad dollars toward geo-targeted areas and/or consumer segments that you previously haven't target in the past. We can also help you shift your messaging from the first phase of reopening, while creating new assets and campaigns to promote recent changes for your business.

Contact us to learn more **1.855.755.2691**

In this final phase of reopening your business, you have been open in some capacity for more than 30 days. Now that you've found a successful approach to operating your business amid ever-evolving circumstances, you are now focused on developing long-term plans for your business—including permanent changes to your business model.

You have the benefit of a steady stream of business to bring in revenue, but you want to be proactive and position your company to become even more resilient in the face of any future economic disruptions you may face.



REIMAGINE

General Messaging

As you reimagine your business and its role in your local community, be sure to communicate that forward-thinking approach to your current customer base:

We're always thinking of you, and thinking ahead! Position your local business as a forward-thinking member of the community. Highlight how you have changed your business to provide better service to your customers, now and in the future. This includes new services and products that directly address your customers' needs.

In times of uncertainty, you can count on us. Emphasize your continued commitment to safety protocols, including social distancing, and showcase your new business practices as part of an ongoing effort to build a sustainable business model, even during times of uncertainty.

We've got the best deals in town! As businesses transition from reopening to embracing a "new normal," they can gradually increase their advertising's focus on sales and deals to attract local business. Take advantage of the warm weather to roll out sidewalk sales, clearance events and other promotions that attract deal-hunters in your community.



Marketing Tips

Emphasize how you're helping your community recover. Has your business shifted to providing services or products that benefit the community? A number of local distilleries across the country stopped alcohol production and instead started making hand sanitizer. Many major clothing brands, including Reebok and Gap, shifted some of their textile production to making face masks.

Embrace advertising channels where media consumption has increased. Live TV, streaming video, and digital audio have all experienced significant increases in daily consumption among U.S. consumers, and many of those consumers plan to maintain this level of consumption in the future. By advertising across these channels, you can continue to reach a large local audience—and if another lockdown strikes and these media channels see another boost in engagement, your business will be ready with the right assets and messaging to quickly take advantage.

Your business may also be providing charitable contributions, such as offering a percentage of sales as a donation to local organizations. If you're giving back, make sure your customers are aware.



Communication Corner

Give sales and deals a bigger spotlight. Remind customers that your business remains a safe place for them to shop and visit.

Consider the Following:

- How have your customers' needs permanently changed?
 - How can you pivot your business offerings to capitalize on social and/or behavioral changes? (Increased social distancing, raised awareness of hygienic concerns, long-term preference for no-contact payments and pickup, etc.)
 - What services can your business continue to offer during a potential second lockdown?
 - What advertising channels can you expand to improve communication in the future? (Email subscribers, social media profiles, business listings, etc.)
 - In what ways can your business commit to making a long-term difference in the community?
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How We Can Help

As businesses and consumers find a "new normal," **we will track shifting media consumption behaviors and help you optimize your ad spending** to maximize audience engagement. New campaigns and assets will be developed to emphasize sales and deals efforts. We will also help build out owned media channels such as email lists and social media followers, strengthening your company's advertising platform for the future—even if another lockdown strikes.

Contact us to learn more **1.855.755.2691**

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Businesses have never faced a competitive landscape where the challenges of local advertising evolve at such a rapid rate.

The best way to keep up with these changes, and place your business at the forefront of these emerging opportunities, is to work with a trusted advertising partner that can offer comprehensive services to both creative development and campaign management.

Our creative solutions team is able to quickly and affordably create high-impact, multi-screen messaging that responds directly to your customers' needs. We can also provide full-scale production of long- and short-format videos, as well as graphic design and animation services to help your business build a presence through any advertising format.



Alan Burkett, Cox Media Kansas/Arkansas

Most importantly, we would like to work with *you* to develop a phased approach for your business' marketing strategy. We'll work together to develop this plan, set up to maximize your ad spending while generating new leads and building awareness for your brand. When it comes to marketing your business, there is no "one-size-fits-all" method.

Regardless of what stage you are in, I'm here to help you consider all of the following options as you get back to business.

- ☐ Update online profiles
- ☐ Utilize social media
- ☐ Use existing marketing channels to advertise job openings
- ☐ Make simple creative changes to existing display advertising
- ☐ Consider geotargeting tactics to reach your best audience
- ☐ Assess competitor strategies, fine-tune remarketing campaigns to address common customer concerns
- ☐ Embrace advertising channels where media consumption has increased like Live TV, streaming video and digital audio
- ☐ Emphasize how you're helping your community recover
- ☐ Be nimble and adjust messaging appropriately, incorporating empathy for your customers

Our advertising platform helps maximize your campaign ROI by offering insightful tools for validating target audiences, and hyper-targeting your messaging to those consumers.

We know your business is unique—and we understand the challenges you face as you reopen. Let's talk about these challenges together—and explain how Cox Media can be the best partner to help your business survive and thrive.

Contact us to learn more.



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