

**COVID-19**



# **MARKETING DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

## **A SMALL BUSINESS HELP KIT**



Usually the only disruptions to small businesses happen seasonally. For example, the week around Christmas is usually pretty slow for website design companies but is hopping for restaurants and bars.

Now we're in a different situation entirely.

Conversion Pipeline is in a unique position to help clients navigate corona closures, because we handle marketing for a large variety of businesses in many different vertical markets.

One question keeps coming up across our client base: What should we do with our marketing efforts during this time?

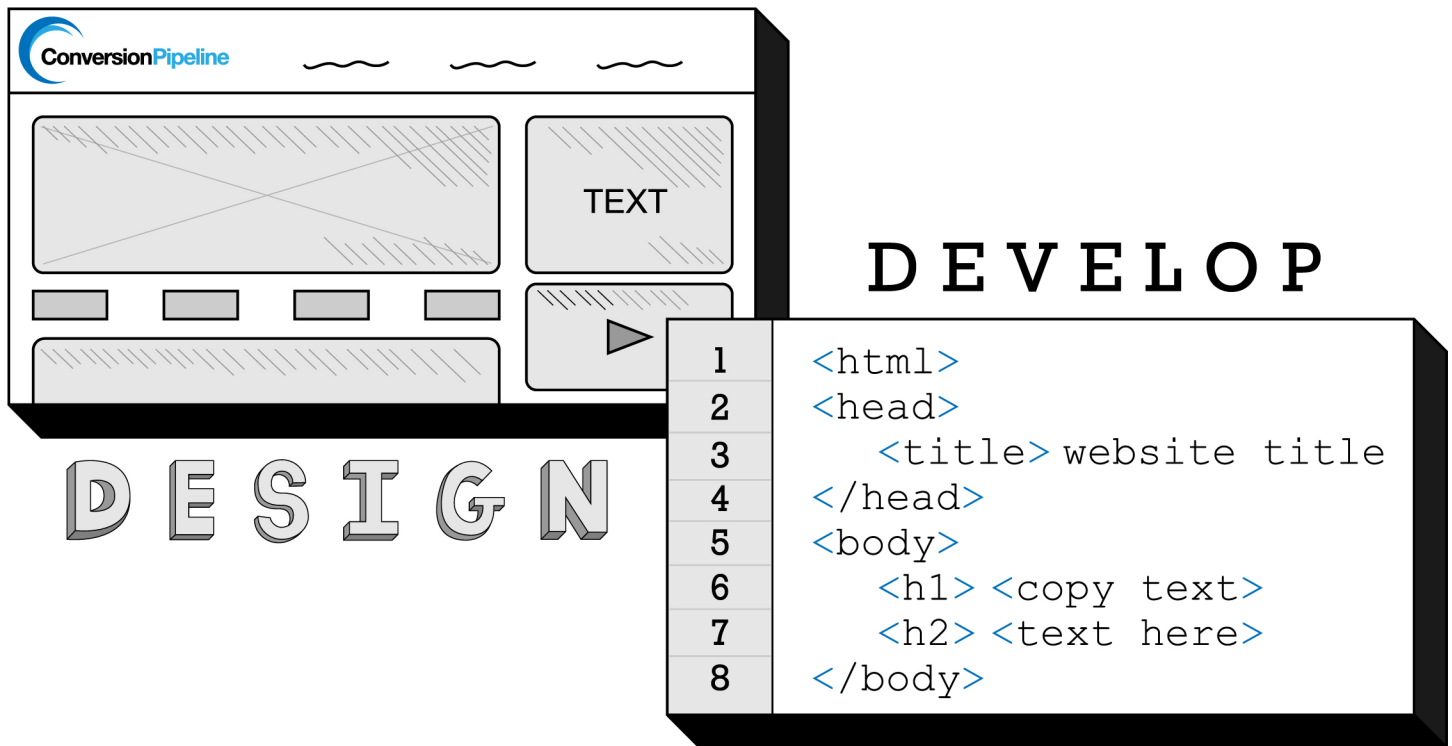
The answer will of course change depending on your market and industry, however there are some strategies that every business, large and small should still execute. We'll organize the help kit into sections based on the type of activity.



Nothing is more important than clear, consistent communication with your employees and with your customers. Internally, there are a few things that are easy to do.

- Use technology to allow your employees to work remotely. Slack is an excellent tool that can enable collaboration online. Instead of a mess of email threads, task managers, and text messages, consolidate your internal communications.
- Use Join.me or Zoom to facilitate screen shares and presentations. These tools can also be used for your client meetings. Instead of a face-to-face, just hop on a video call.
- If you do not have an email system set up, now is the time. The gold standard is HubSpot, where we can set up emails and automated drip campaigns, all linked to gather with your Customer Relationship Manager (CRM). But for many small businesses, getting set up on Constant Contact or Mailchimp is a perfectly good alternative.
- Get your email system set up, create a nice email from one of the templates, and keep your clients informed about your office hours of operation, specials, contact information, or whoever else needs to be communicated.





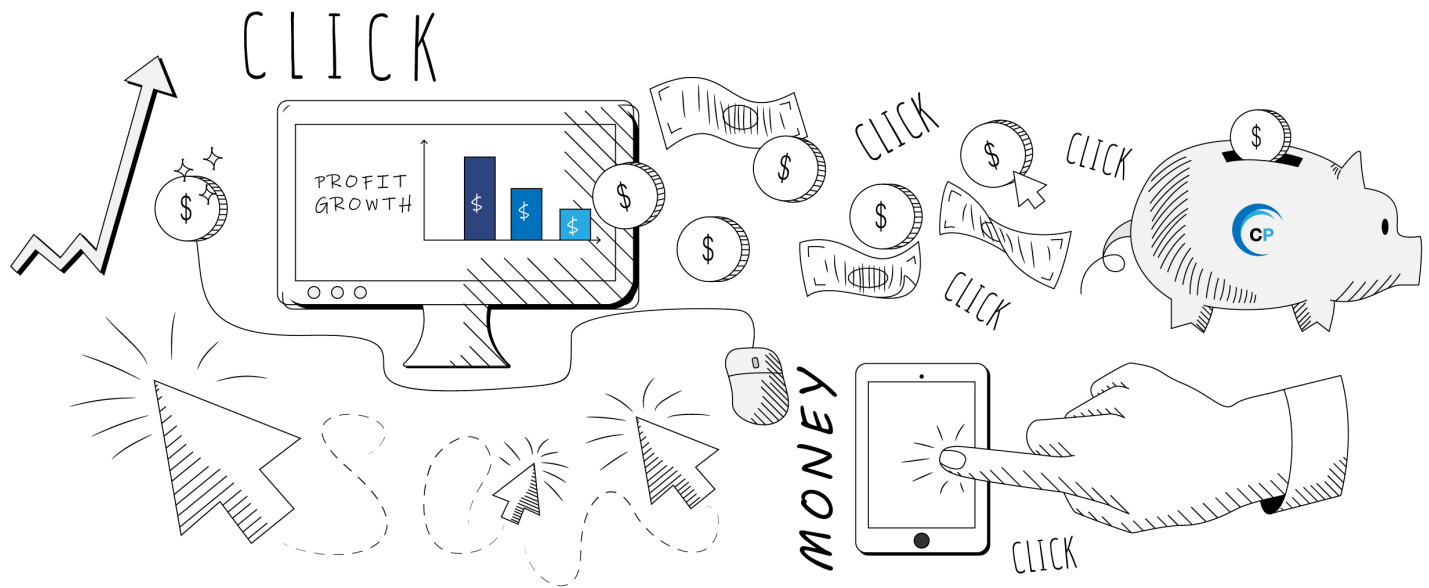
Has some part of your website been bothering you? Maybe your footer is cluttered. Maybe your blog posts are unorganized. Whatever the case, a slow time is a great time to refresh the look and feel of your website.

- Migration to better hosting. Like development projects, lots of our clients are using this time to migrate their website to better website hosting environments. Since there is a little less going on, anything that might disrupt web operations can be tackled now, versus during hot business times.

We've had dozens of clients migrate from GoDaddy hosting to WP Engine® in the past year or so. With loading times and performance such an integral part of digital marketing performance, we're encouraging clients to move to high performance website hosting. Now is a great time to do that.

- Test new shipping offers. With everybody at home, our eCommerce clients are actually seeing business increase! Now is a great time to test out some new shipping offers. Using WordPress plugins like ShipStation, or the various WooCommerce shipping modules, you can set up all kinds of shipping rules that will appeal to your clients.

# Pay Per Click Management (PPC)



Your online paid ads are critical, since it is a hard cost, and has a direct cost per acquisition (CPA). Some serious decisions need to be made here. Your vertical market and geography will play a huge role in your decisions, so too will some armchair psychology. Digital marketing, after all, is part science, and part art. We'll need both when deciding whether to pause campaigns, expand campaigns, or leave them as-is. Here are some examples and considerations...

eCommerce clients, for the most part, have increasing their advertising budget. With people at home, there is more time to go online. Moreover, people are finding that they have the time for home projects, so if they can order lifestyle items, or home project supplies online, they are doing it.

All of our many dental clients have temporarily closed offices, except for actual dental emergencies. Because paid online ads are used for direct conversions, i.e., call now for an appointment, we have paused ads. (We've stepped up our SEO efforts, however, more on that below.)

Companies with a long sales cycle are continuing efforts. For example, CPA firms, IT infrastructure, and government contractors, are all staying the course. If your company has a sales cycle that is more than 6 weeks, you should absolutely continue to market using PPC. Even if the current situation lasts longer than that, you'll need to continue to fill your pipeline with sales leads (pun intended).

We have several private school clients and based on their sales cycle, we are keeping the PPC effort going. Since enrollment in any school generally happens months – even up to a year – in advance, keeping your prospective students and their parents exposed to your brand.

The key here is to evaluate who your clients are, what your sales cycle is, and scale back, keep the same, or increase your paid online ads accordingly.

## Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

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# Search ...



SEO is not a “one-and-done” or short-term activity. SEO is the ongoing process of building website authority and website health so that it is more likely to gain targeted exposure in search engines like Google and Bing.

Stopping SEO would be a huge mistake. This is when you should pump up your efforts and plan for the future.

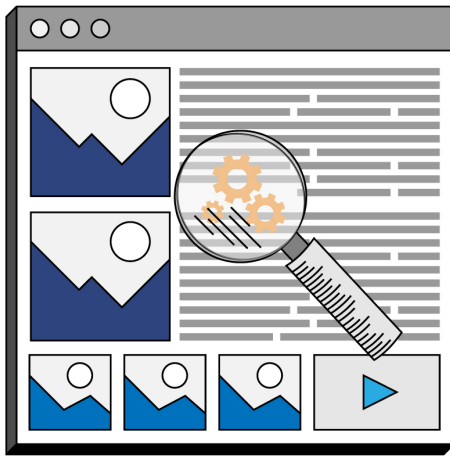
SEO has three (3) main components: Content, Technical, and Links.



- Content is a great area to focus on during this circumstance. In short, you should be consistently producing fresh, relevant, unique content for your website.

Often, a good blog post once a month is enough to keep your website fresh. Some businesses really need more content, more regularly, to get a good boost with search engines. Use this time to plan out your editorial calendar, procure images to go along with each post, and get them drafted in WordPress, with publish dates out into the future.

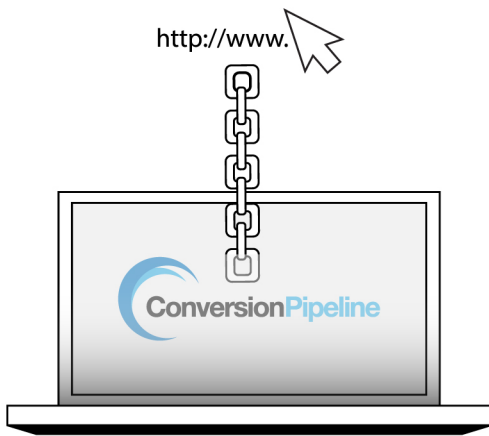
How great would it be to have 6 months of blog posts completed and scheduled?



- Technical SEO is a harder nut to crack, because it takes some expertise. You can use this down-turn to identify technical areas that need work. This goes hand in glove with “website development” ideas above. If you’re a Conversion Pipeline client you already have structured data for “business,” but does your site have structured data for reviews, recipes, books, products, breadcrumbs, courses, ratings, events, and on and on. Every chance you have to wrap specific content in structured data tags is an opportunity to improve your search optimization.

Using Google Search Console, you can evaluate any 404 pages or website errors, even use the Google Page Speed Insights tool to evaluate your site and make technical fixes.

Technical SEO is a great way to improve your long-term optimizations. Not pursuing technical fixes can be like “death by a thousand cuts.” A single deficiency may not be a big deal, but taken together, if your site has lots of small issues, you may find it difficult to build site authority and get good search exposure over time.



- Building backlinks is still hugely important. From its inception, Google has used the number of and quality of sites that link to yours as a measure of your site's authority. That is, the more sites that link to you, the more important your site must be.

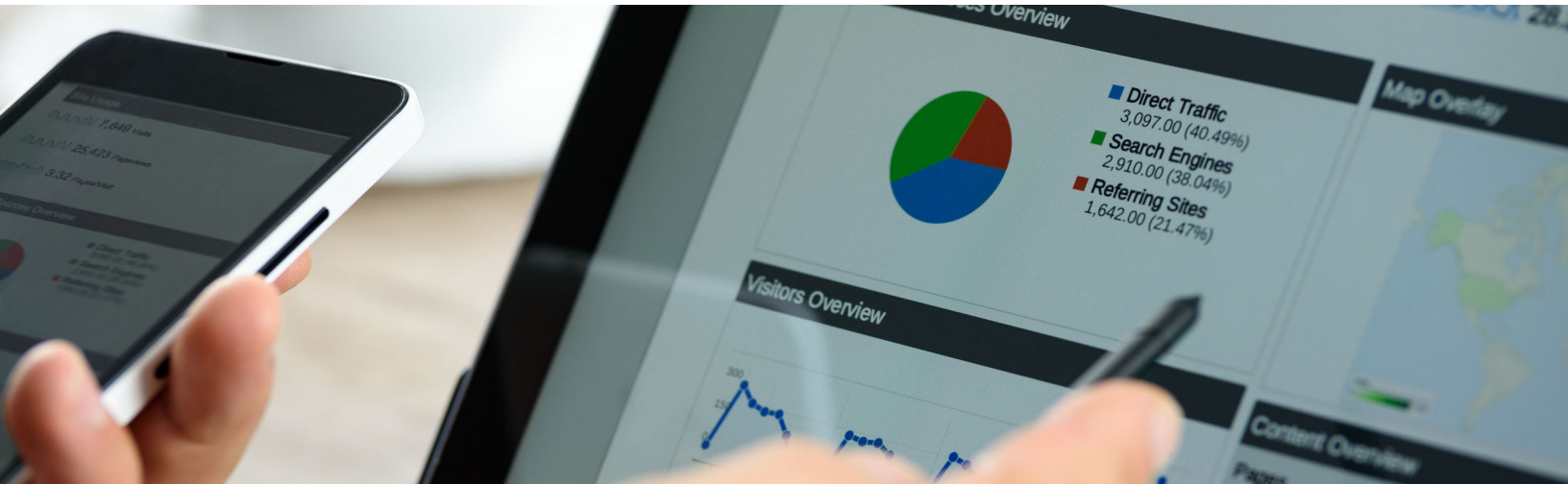
By finding new sites out there on the internet to link to your site, you are building your site authority and showing Google that your site is very important.

Use this down time to build new backlinks. Find other sites to link to yours. Write a guest post for a relevant, but non-competitive, blog. Find experts to interview for content, and then to link their sites to yours. Linking is an essential part of SEO and should never be stopped.

Think of it this way: if PPC is like going to the store for tomatoes (while practicing social distancing of course!), SEO is like growing a garden in your back yard. You need to keep your SEO effort going strong so that your business comes out the other side just as strong or stronger.



# Analytics Review and Deep Dive



Conversion Pipeline clients know that we look at analytics regularly and take a pretty comprehensive look each month. Now is the time to look deeper.

\*If you don't have analytics set up – do that now! Assuming you have it in place, start digging into the more esoteric elements of Google Analytics.

- Examine your Assisted conversions and find out how many soft conversions are tied to each of your marketing mediums. It is not uncommon to see some 50% more conversions attributed to Organic (SEO). For example, let's say you have 100 form completions and phone calls (conversions) in a given month, and when you dig into the Conversion module of Analytics, you see you have 40 "assisted conversions" from organic. That means there were some 40% additional conversions from that channel! At some point of the user journey, 40 people clicked an organic search engine listing. They may not have converted directly, but that click on an organic listing "helped" the conversion.
- Another area to dig into is geography. By slicing and dicing the geographic reporting tool, you can drill into the areas of the country that have a propensity to convert. With that knowledge, you can write geo-focused content, or even use bid-optimizations for those geographies in your paid ads.

Google Analytics is extraordinarily powerful. Use this slow down to really dig into every element in Analytics, make judgements, and turn the analysis into some actionable optimizations.

## Summary

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Even though this a global pandemic. This is not the time to stop marketing. Even businesses who have closed their offices or store can use this as a time for opportunity. Even if not marketing, don't stop thinking creatively! Find new ways for your employees to help. One of our clients has a dental practice in Charlottesville, Virginia. Since the office is closed, some employees have been tasked with lab clean up, inventory, even IT organization. The point is that you can use the down time for all kinds of things that you may not ordinarily do.

Use analytics to help drive decisions and then consider your clients and how they may like to interact with you. Give attention to each of the main marketing vehicles mentioned above and take action where you can.

Don't slow down, don't stop thinking creatively, don't stop working toward your success goals. Should you need help with any of these marketing initiatives please contact us.

And...wash your hands.

Stay healthy and safe!

*Michael Delpierre*  
Michael Delpierre

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