The changing landscape of marketing; how to adapt to a new reality.



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1. Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has caused the biggest disruption in decades, thrusting the global economy into the worst recession since World War II. It's also anticipated that economic activity among advanced markets is anticipated to shrink 7% this year.

With billions of people working remotely, the temporary closure of many industries, and rates of unemployment not seen since the Great Depression, so many aspects of how businesses operate will need to change in order to survive and thrive past this time of uncertainty.

The crisis has played havoc with marketing departments, challenging our way of thinking and doing what was "normal".

Spiceworks Ziff Davis hosted a three-part CMO roundtable webinar series, inviting an amazing line-up of global speakers from a variety of leading tech companies to share their wealth of experience, insights and ideas to help marketers effectively adapt to a new marketing reality.

In this handy wrap up report, the key takeaways and findings from the panellists have been summarized to help guide marketers through these 'uncertain times'.



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2. The speakers



Shanee Ben-Zur

Head of Marketing & Growth at Crunchbase

Shanee leads the teams that shape the Crunchbase brand, acquire new customers, and retain users. With 14 years of B2C and B2B experience at start-ups and public companies, she understands how to bring the best elements of consumer marketing to the enterprise.



Caryn Pratt

VP, Global Marketing at Spiceworks Ziff Davis

Seasoned B2B marketing and public relations professional with 25 years of experience managing all aspects of marketing and corporate communications with an emphasis on strategy, messaging, positioning, brand management, and demand generation (with serious ABM chops).



Veena Glover

Senior Marketing Manager at Spiceworks Ziff Davis

With over a decade of experience in global B2B organizations Veena executes innovative, integrated targeted marketing strategies globally, to bolster brand awareness, generate leads and achieve growth.

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Kerstin Demko

VP Marketing at Brivo

A seasoned marketing professional, Kerstin has extensive experience positioning technology products to the commercial market and is a recognized leader in online media marketing, branding, and new media competitive positioning. Kerstin is an expert in channel and partner marketing and was voted a Woman of the Channel in 2018 and 2019.



Maxine Eiland

Senior Director of Digital Marketing & Web at SailPoint Technologies

Maxine began her career as a self-taught coder, and over the years has developed a keen knowledge for creating digital experiences that surprise and delight. At SailPoint she has helped make the world of identity governance simpler and engaging.



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Manish Godha

Founder & CEO,
Advaiya Solutions

A technology professional and enthusiast, Manish is particularly interested in the ways in which technology can have a trans-formational impact on business. He specializes in enabling individualized solution sales and has developed analysis based frameworks for allowing effective profiling and solution discovery.



Rohan Kamra

Regional Digital Marketing Manager - Asia Pacific & Japan – Intel Corporation

Digital marketer with over a decade of experience leading marketing strategy and customer experience for brands across Tech, CPG and FSI.

Currently Rohan is leading Paid Media, Content & MarTech initiatives for Intel's B2B Business Units across 15 markets in APJ. Prior to joining Intel he has worked in the agency world managing brands like Samsung Mobile, PepsiCo, Bacardi and others where he evangelized digital as a medium in the overall marketing mix.

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3. Digital Strategy & Transformation

Digital marketing transformation is hot right now. There is a rapid shift from traditional marketing to digital marketing and technologies, driven by the pandemic. Recent findings show that global spending on digital transformation technologies and services is forecast to grow 10.4% in 2020 to $1.3 trillion.

Some companies are turning to a full-blown digital marketing transformation to survive this crisis. This seems reasonable as restrictions, lockdowns and remote working around the world has made apparent the incredible value of digital. In fact, a fifth of large enterprises are investing in digital transformation initiatives during the coronavirus pandemic.

Maxine -
How can marketers adapt their digital strategy during these times?

- Pivoting to digital can be quick – use this to your advantage.
- We're all on a learning curve, try something new & different.
- Small changes can result in a huge impact.
- Ask your experts and those in your community for ideas!
- Check out SailPoint's video series called identity talk (great content hub!)

Kerstin -
What digital actions could marketers put into immediate action?

- Re-evaluate Martech stack… what's essential and what's luxury.
- Consider investing in or upgrading: IP tracking (to identify intent), Virtual events platforms, Content experience platforms, Social media management platforms, PPC and CRM.

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Offline marketing strategies

Spiceworks Ziff Davis recently checked in with 40+ marketers to find out how COVID-19 has affected them, and some directional trends are beginning to emerge. Some marketers are saying they are decreasing the amount previously budgeted for offline channels. This seems reasonable since most face to face events have been cancelled. However other offline marketing channels are still viable.

Reports from Forrester suggested that the average firm was expected to allocate 55% of their total marketing budget to offline and 45% of their total marketing budget to online.

Rohan -
How can marketers who have relied on traditional offline marketing strategies, successfully move to an all-digital strategy?

- Process of test and learn.
- Try small, if it's successful then scale up.
- Invest in digital infrastructure and Martech stack… don't make it an afterthought.

Kerstin -
What does the future hold for offline marketing channels such as print advertising and direct mailers?

- Will continue to be integral in marketing strategy.
- Direct mail and brochures are still very tactile and a great way to connect with an audience.
- Will remain an important part of the marketing mix, but the ratio of offline vs online will vary.
- Consider – what's the right balance in using these tactics to reach your audience effectively?

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4. Revenue Generation

Organizations are striving to meet their Q3 and Q4 goals, and some might have the tendency to push forward with the same vigour and determination as last year. However, marketers are treading in uncharted waters and there needs to be a fine balance between being pushy to hit targets and revenue figures, whilst taking into consideration how the crisis is affecting customers.

Gartner's research around Tech CEOs concerns around revenue growth indicated that 86% of Tech CEOs believe revenue growth will be impacted the most from a global economic recession.

Shanee -
How can marketers show empathy and care for their customers whilst fulfilling the business need of revenue generation?

- What we want as a brand is not the only thing that matters.
- Show that you care about topics that are top of mind with your customers.
- Participate in conversations that people care about.
- Slow down on aggressive sales tactics.
- If you push too hard, it will be hard to re-earn trust.

What is Crunchbase's approach to growth during a pandemic, and the recent cultural revolution?

- Listen and take note of feedback from customers, prospects and employees.
- Provide resources for people to help them in these challenging times.
- Take active steps to support diversity and inclusion.
- Product roadmap was reprioritised, generated plenty of conversation - a roaring success!

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5. Investment

There have been some recent findings that indicate silver linings during what otherwise has been a bit of 'doom and gloom'. In fact, 60% of marketing leaders indicated that they are anticipating increased Martech spend in the next 12 months.

Some companies are increasing their investment in areas such as IT, infrastructure, MarTech and Marketing Automation. In 2019, Gartner projected Martech spending would make up 26% of the total budget for 2020. But due to the Coronavirus, surveys report a larger increase in Martech spend for 2020 and 2021.

Rohan -
How has Intel invested in their MarTech stack, marketing automation and customer experience?

- Investment in MarTech stack and AdTech prior to the pandemic has been advantageous.
- Acceleration of adoption has increased since pandemic.
- Strove to improve and build on customer experience with websites and email marketing.
- Bringing empathy and human-human connection has been successful.
- More time and resources invested on contextualising, personalising and enhancing customer experiences.

Manish -
How can companies thrive in the 'new normal' and what areas should they invest in?

- Reach out to your audience in a more targeted way.
- Understand your audiences' current pain points and situation and align your communication and messages accordingly.
- Use data and analysis (such as customer behaviour, campaign details) as a guide on what needs to be done.
- Ensure your team have the right tech/tools they need, to be able to perform together, efficiently and remotely.
- Invest in: digital infrastructure, productivity of people, learning.

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Investment in IT

Technology is helping support companies and individuals during the largest ever 'remote working' phase and an initial survey by Spiceworks Ziff Davis in March found that companies were looking to increase their investment in IT. After the initial rush to remote work, another poll was launched amongst SWZD's IT pros, which indicated that IT spending will continue and businesses were still seeking out IT solutions to help them deal with remote challenges.



Caryn -
How can these research findings benefit marketers in IT & Tech looking to connect with IT buyers?

- Frenzy has passed, but further investment is still needed.
- 54% of IT pros still need to make further IT purchases.
- Great opportunity for marketers to influence buyers who are in-market.
- Utilise valuable and educational content to approach buyers who are showing purchase intent.

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6. Data and Insights



Data has traditionally helped to drive B2B business success. Data and insights support marketing and sales, by helping to identify valuable customers, providing granular insight into their motivations, attitudes and purchase behaviour and helping the brand engage with and convert prospects to customers.

Manish -
What has changed due to the crisis?

- Need for better visibility for monitoring performance.
- Many aspects of prospecting and building relationships are more data driven now.
- Need to use data to enrich customer experience - being more empathetic and using personalisation in messaging.

How can marketers utilise analytics, customer insights and automation to help them during this crisis?

- Empower marketing, sales and customer experience teams with access to recent data and insights.
- Find out what's changed for the audience to help understand and approach customers more effectively.
- Customer insights/customer data platforms can help to aggregate data from multiple sources to provide ‘single customer view’. This will help address their anxieties and immediate needs.

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7. Brand and the buyer's journey

Having a strong brand strategy which incorporates long term plans to achieve specific goals is essential at the best of times, and even more crucial in the current climate created by COVID-19.

Maxine -
How can marketers manage and adapt brand marketing strategies in these uncertain times?

- With so much uncertainty now, use your brand to provide assurance to customers.
- People are shifting to a remote lifestyle, resulting in some struggles… how can you alleviate their pain points?
- Change narrative from 'I' to 'We'.
- Be empathetic and be helpful.

With your brand being the bridge between your product/services and your customers, now more than ever marketers need to keep communicating with their customers, reinforcing the company's identity, values and personality.

How can marketers strengthen their brand?

- Show the human side to your brand.
- Be present and authentic.
- Create trust.
- Be relevant and use personal touches with customers.

The B2B buying cycle is becoming more complex each year. Pre-Corona, there was an average of 6-10 people involved in complex B2B purchasing decisions, which meant it was relatively challenging to track, target and engage with the continually growing number of decision makers. On top of that, marketers were trying to help construct an ongoing relationship with prospects throughout every stage of the buyer's journey.

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Shanee -
How has the B2B buying journey changed due to corona?

- B2B decision making was motivated by trust and ROI.
- Marketing funnel has changed.
- Now fear and uncertainty is affecting decision making.
- Journey is longer than before.

How can brands guide their customers through the 'new' buying journey?

- Be patient with yourself and your customers.
- Lead Nurturing is going to be a long term investment.
- Create a solid content pipeline.
- Provide message of reliability, stability and support.



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8. Virtual Events

Live events were a large part of many marketing strategies and it has been one of the hardest hit channels due to social distancing measures and restrictions on crowd numbers. Recent findings from Spiceworks Ziff Davis showed that prior to the Coronavirus; trade shows, conferences and networking events were popular offline marketing channels.

However, most marketers have probably been faced with the decision to move their planned face-to-face events to virtual events.

SpiceWorld is SWZD's biggest annual event connecting 1000's of IT pros with tech brands. It has been held face-to-face for 13 years, which has now been converted to a virtual event.

Caryn -
What value differential can be seen between digital and physical events?

- There is a powerful increase in registration numbers with virtual events.
- This year SpiceWorld is projecting 10x the number of registrants.
- Broader global audience.
- Extended shelf life of material being presented.
- Ability to capture full booth analytics.

Caryn -
What does the future look like for the events business model?

- Possible hybrid model of virtual and face-to-face.
- Shift to both going forward, even once restrictions lift.
- Continue to capitalise on increase in reach and longer shelf life in virtual events.

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Rohan -
How can marketers leverage global virtual events to be as successful as their F2F predecessors?

- Try to execute a hybrid model - recreate the interactions that are possible physically in a virtual platform.
- Primary focus – give people access to high quality, easy accessible, ungated content.
- During events, try to increase interactivity (e.g. via polls).

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9. Content Marketing and Customer Behaviour



Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, 'Content was King' and 'Distribution was Queen'. Marketers knew the drill…plan and implement a thorough content marketing strategy to produce high quality, engaging, relevant content for prospects and clients.

Fast forward to today and it's not enough to just churn out the same content as before. Marketers must now create high quality content to cater the need at all funnel stages. They're having to rethink what type of content to create, the topic and tone, not to mention through which channels are now appropriate to reach the intended audience.

Maxine -
How should marketers be rethinking their content marketing strategy?

- Consider what type of content would engage with your audience now (e.g. video with transcripts).
- Think of content as a cycle - what are the touch points where people can interact?
- What are their new/changed behaviours?
- Continue to keep in contact with customers, even after purchase.
- Ensure all different touch points work together and tell the same story.

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How has the content marketing funnel been impacted in light of COVID-19?

- Audiences are now in front of a screen all day!
- Consider search and intent – where are they in the buying cycle?
- Provide value in content.

What advice can you give to marketers with time/resources limitations?

- Repurpose content – how can you transform content and make it available digitally?
- Create quick videos or articles.
- Leverage resources in your company – ask the experts.
- Don't be scared to try social media.
- Learn and grow from this.



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Shanee -
How have customers' content consumption preferences and habits changed?

- When everything is uncertain around you, you want certainty.
- They are yearning for an interesting voice of reason.
- Customers want content that is intriguing, educational and helpful.
- Crunchbase news – covering trends early on (e.g. toilet roll pandemic and bidet sales was wildly popular!)
- Keep it fun and light but relevant to the topic that is top of mind!
- Purchase behaviour trends are showing that with self serve audience there's a quicker recovery compared to direct sales.

What are the differences between B2B vs B2C2B behaviour?

- Consumers are faster and reactive.
- B2B a bit slower but will follow along.
- Each give signals and insights on others' behaviour.

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10. Organic Traffic and SEO

Organic traffic is an indicator of consumer confidence, and pre-COVID-19, a strong content marketing strategy & solid SEO strategy helped drive organic traffic to website.

Kerstin -
How has organic traffic been affected by this crisis?

- Mild impact - slow, downward trend in organic.
- Most people are WFH, everyone's looking at SEO.
- As some marketer's budgets weaken, instead of paid results, organic has become much more important to the search function.
- At Brivo – we've focused on web pages, increasing key word reaches and producing content (e.g. increase blogs).

Shanee -
What advice can you give to marketers who've seen a decrease in organic traffic?

- Produce helpful, consistent content.
- Utilise paid media to supplement content creation.
- Invest in a strong web presence.

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Maxine -
How can marketers invest on their company's website to increase traffic?

- Look at what people are searching for.
- Answer the public.
- Analyse core topics and surrounding topics and tie together.
- Examine where your audience are searching from.
- Stay top of new search trends.
- At SailPoint we have repurposed content (e.g. un-gated PDF pieces, turning into HTML for our website).

Shanee -
How has SEO been a direct reflection of consumer confidence?

- People's anxieties are showing in their searches.
- SEO traffic similar to stock market – deep V recovery.
- Slow recovery and now we're at pre-COVID-19 level (as of mid-July 2020).
- People's searches include 'during COVID' (e.g. 'How to generate pipeline with Crunchbase, during COVID-19').
- Create content to answer their questions.
- Answer questions we anticipate they will ask.

Consumer confidence has been fluctuating dramatically since March. For the last few months, this economic indicator which measures the optimism of consumers, has been changing one line with how the crisis has been playing out.

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11. Adapting your marketing messaging and communication

This report so far has covered how to create content to drive traffic to websites, how to leverage the 'new marketing funnel', and how to appeal to the changing buyer behaviour and buying team. Marketing teams worldwide have been churning out libraries of engaging, relevant corona content in response to the crisis.

With marketers still turning to content creation to boost brand awareness and generate leads, it's still important that brands continue to take into consideration the sensitivity of the nature of the crisis and adapt their messaging accordingly. SWZD's recent findings showed that offering empathy, and acknowledging the crisis were still essential elements when planning marketing messaging and communication in this current climate.

Kerstin -
How can marketers adapt their message?

- At the beginning of pandemic, messaging was the most important aspect to consider.
- Even now, it's crucial to show empathy.
- Show that you're still 'in business' and still there for your customers.
- Connect what your company and brand does with what's happening out there in the world.
- At Brivo, we examined our product suite – how can our cloud-based products help companies to adapt in this time?

What tone of voice should marketers be using and how can they practice agile and responsive marketing?

- Don't sensationalise what's going on.
- Be authentic, thoughtful and mindful about what everyone's going through.
- To practice agile marketing, re-adapt your message and help companies to adapt to the new world.
- Keep a calm and focused view on what is happening.

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How can marketers ensure they are not exploiting the situation?

- How can marketers ensure they are not exploiting the situation?
- Listen and reach out.
- Whole philosophy should be to reach out and ask your customer ‘how are you doing’.
- Make a connection, as they are people buying from people.
- Be human, kind and helpful.
- Make effort as a community.
- Offer lots of opportunity to engage with brand and people to build community and collaborate.
- At Brivo, we created education opportunities.
- Trained our employees and sales teams and channels to give back to the community.

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12. Lead Nurturing

Lead nurturing has always played an important role to help cultivate an on-going relationship with prospects throughout their buying journey. In the right hands it's a powerful marketing strategy that delivers relevant, informative content designed to educate and engage your audience whilst priming them to purchase.

Months on since the pandemic peaked, it's understandable many organizations may still be on a spending freeze, but just because a client is unable to spend right now, doesn't mean that the relationship is a lost cause, which is where lead nurturing becomes so crucial.

Rohan -
How is Intel using customer nurturing and lead nurturing to support customers?

- Lead Nurturing portion is enriched.
- More interactivity – including short videos.
- More multi-touch.
- Using short videos for nurturing.
- Use social to talk to customers and see how they're doing (not typical sales message!)
- Add personal touches.
- Helps to contextualise the message.

How can marketers nurture these relationships?

- Omnichannel nurturing strategy can work well.
- Use social channels now that large populations are WFH.
- Consider creating multiple touch points beyond email marketing.
- Produce interactive content to engage with your audience.

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13. Go-To-Market Strategy

VPs of sales and marketing teams were likely to have had a clear go-to-market strategy on how they were going to launch products to their market and deliver the unique value prop to customers, whilst achieving competitive advantage.

Naturally, many GTM strategies have had to shift.



Kerstin -
How should marketers now approach GTM strategy?

- Go back to your strategy – revisit and rethink the basics.
- How has your audience changed? What are their current needs?
- The value you were offering in February is quite possibly different now.
- How to reinforce value now?
- What is your audience's new buying cycle?
- What were your goals? Do they need tweaking?
- Connect across teams and align your teams together.

'Marketing is the glue to help companies move forward!'

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B2B ecommerce



Manish -
How should marketers respond to the challenges posed by the current crisis and its effects on B2B ecommerce?

- B2B ecommerce has been more aligned with overall economic environment.
- Timings and depth of impact vary.
- In the long run there's a change in buying pattern that's going to take hold.
- Much larger diversity in the overall business ecosystem.
- More vendors and more customers = more opportunities.
- Provide customer education.
- Consider how B2B ecommerce can integrate with their customers and supply chain management systems.

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14. Innovation and Competition

There's an old saying; "Nothing changes if nothing changes." Well if nothing changes, we stay the same. We don't grow. We don't evolve.

Many industries are embracing the changes and trying out new unconventional ideas to stay in touch with their audience. From estate agents using augmented reality to show houses for sale to potential buyers, traditional immersive experiences like escape rooms and pub quizzes moving to virtual experiences to encourage virtual team building, there have been all sorts of ideas put into practice!



Maxine -
What new tactics can marketers use to connect with customers and prospects during the crisis?

- Join the conversations with customers.
- What is the behavioural data?
- How to tie it all together?
- Are they lacking a tool? – create a quiz
- Want to answer questions? – create videos
- Enhance your website experience, personalise it.
- Invest in market stack e.g. chatbot for 1:1 experience
- Be personal.

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Shanee -
How can marketers stay ahead of the competition?

- In-person events won't be the same – try something different virtually.
- How can you adapt and embrace virtual culture better?
- Don't keep doing what you were doing before.
- Look back for inspiration for the future.
- Focus on customers.
- Empathise, maintain brand trust and shift message.
- Innovation is an opportunity in disguise!
- Can't wait for a trend to happen…so try something new.
- There are no rules – so break out and try something totally out of the box.

Kerstin -
How can those with limited resources and budgets stay innovative?

- Innovation can come from anywhere.
- Collaborate with other teams in your organisation – sales who are listening to customers.
- Reset your mind.
- Adapt some innovative ideas.
- Be scrappy and break out of a rut!

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Rohan -
What modern experiences is Intel likely to adopt?

- Customer experience is crucial.
- More layers in the virtual arena.
- Virtual reality and videos to engage & re-engage with customers and prospects.
- Multi touch points across multi-channel.

Manish -
Is there an opportunity for Advaiya in terms of innovation?

- Client's budgets and preference have changed.
- So, what are quick wins that we can deliver?
- How can we talk about data aggregation via lead coupling for example?
- How to upgrade customer experience?
- Providing value delivery (e.g. with suppliers and employees using digital initiatives).



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15. The Future

No one could have anticipated events unfolding around the world in such dramatic ways. Many companies would have had in place IT disaster recovery or crisis management plans in PR for example, but very few (if any) would have planned for a pandemic that would shut down countries.



Manish -
Once the crisis erupted, what steps did Advaiya take?

- Anticipating pandemic wasn't on anyone's radar.
- Changed our revenue predictions.
- Relooked at marketing and sales processes immediately.
- Shifted investments from larger sales facing to inside sales.
- Focused more on innovative digital ways of communication.
- Created more personalised events.
- Found newer ways of communication.
- What new services and messages to get in touch with the audience.

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Maxine -
Planning a long term marketing strategy can feel daunting. What approach should marketers take when planning marketing strategy in 2021 and beyond?

- No physical space.
- WFH can accomplish a lot.
- Digital is going to play a key role.
- Should stay at the forefront.
- Experience needs to be huge.
- Surprise and delight!
- Want to be memorable.
- Provide personal relevant information for the audience.

Shanee -
What are your predictions for new marketing tactics for 2021?

- How can we live in a virtual world and do things better?
- Sift through customers, through automation and still be human.
- Customers are yearning for human experiences.
- Personalised web, chat bots, hyper personalised content.
- Blend best of 'in-person' world and 'virtual' world.
- Technology will lead the way.
- Remember the humanity of the people, who we are, and our customers.

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Conclusion

Since the pandemic began, everyone has been thrust full throttle into this new reality.

Marketers have had to reset their minds and grapple with changing entire strategies for the year and rethink how, when, why and where to communicate with their audience.

The world has been catapulted even further into the digital landscape and so marketers are rethinking their investment, reconsidering offline strategies and using creative ideas to stay in touch with prospects and customers.

It's a challenging time for brands, but marketers have already seen the value of content and lead nurturing to drive brand awareness and generate a pipeline for sales. And now more than ever, as buyer behaviour changes, marketers need to continue practicing agile and responsive marketing.

When countries begin lifting lockdown rules, life will not 'return to normal'. But one thing is for sure. Marketers are innovative, resilient and 'will remain the glue to help drive companies forward'.

From our audience to yours – stay safe and market smart.



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At SWZD we help B2B marketers strategically plan, develop, and execute integrated campaigns, stemming from our deep understanding of tech buyers and the buyer's journey.

From creating content, launching ABM, producing virtual events and so much more, our extensive digital marketing expertise, combined with our comprehensive global intent data will give you access to our in-market buyers at every step of their journey.

We believe marketing done right helps everyone win. Speak to us today and see how we can help marketing and sales optimize their marketing ROI, outperform competitors and gain market share.

Contact Us



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