

# Marketing in times of uncertainty

By [Andrea Paulsen](#)

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Last year I recommended starting the year with a [marketing plan](#). But the year turned out so different to anything we could have imagined, and many marketing plans and ideas were shelved. Some for good reason. With reduced income, the marketing budget also shrinks.



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The bigger problem was that nobody knew what would work in our constantly changing world. So, many of us did the best we could with what we had; others had a “wait and see” approach.

The tumultuous year of 2020 presented us with unprecedented crises and challenges. It was a year of constant change, of learning new ways to do business amidst ongoing uncertainty. We were stretched to the limit in our ability to cope and to overcome.

But we’ve learnt to adjust, to improvise, to innovate, to work remotely, and to meet online. Many of us have learnt more in the past 10 months than we have in the past 10 years. And many of us were probably surprised by our resilience in the year that was.

My take-away from 2020: The only thing we can be sure of is that uncertainty is going to be our new way of life. How we operate our businesses and how we market our services will have to remain flexible. But, according to Albert Einstein: “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”

## Marketing in 2021

A new year – a fresh start?

Although we're still in a season of uncertainty, it's time to get your marketing back on track if you want to retain and grow your client base. As David Ogilvy, one of the advertising greats of our time, said:

“ *Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark.*

*You know what you're doing, but nobody else does.* ”

Marketing is one of the most important aspects of business survival. You've got to have a marketing strategy to promote your brand. If your budget is limited, prioritise digital because that's where you'll get the most bang for your buck.

## Expand your digital presence

The most cost-effective way to get your message out is via social media and email.

Keep in touch with your existing client base through regular updates. They need reassurance of your ongoing availability to deliver your services. Prospective clients also need to see your consistent presence to develop confidence in your ability to provide continuity of service.

- **Your website:** Your website is your number one priority. It's your calling card. If you haven't got one, get one. If you have one, refresh the design if the look is outdated. Replace existing content with updated information and upload new items regularly.
- **Social media:** People are more active on social media than ever. You can't afford not to be seen. Have a schedule for regular posts of newsworthy information, and posts around holidays and other events.
- **Newsletters:** Write articles that you can send out in an email newsletter, post on your website and on social media, and submit to relevant publications. One article gets multiple exposures – that's time well-spent.
- **Brochures, pitch templates, emailers:** Update design and content. Email is your main method of direct communication with clients.
- **Webinars:** Seminars used to be a good place to provide valuable information and network with clients. The same can be done online, just differently.

Ensure what you put out is presented professionally with a consistent brand identity and voice. Your messaging cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. Be discerning in what you send out. Quality over quantity. Customise, personalise, and follow up.

Marketing is not only done by marketing people. We advise on the way forward, put a marketing plan in place, and do the groundwork by preparing your marketing tools. Telephonic follow-up by the people who provide the service you're offering is crucial. People do business with people, not companies.

## The right mindset

We're not alone in how we experience living and working in our changed reality. How we deal with people, whether clients, suppliers, or staff, is more important than ever.

- Focus on what you can do, not on restrictions and limitations.
- Be flexible and open to suggestions. Do things differently.
- Be solution-oriented. See how you can fix a situation, not who's to blame for what went wrong.
- Cooperate with others. Focus on what you have in common not on what divides you.
- Be supportive, encourage rather than criticise. Kindness and understanding will go a long way. People rise to expectations given half a chance.
- Be patient with others. We're all still finding our bearings in our new way of life.

### **A last thought**

Yes, you still need a marketing plan. When things change, adjust your plan. If your marketing activities last year didn't give you the desired results, be bold and try something new.

*When obstacles arise, you change your direction to reach your goal, you do not change your decision to get there. ~ Zig Ziglar*

### **ABOUT ANDREA PAULSEN**

I provide freelance writing, proofreading and editing services, with main focus on professional services.

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