

How to boost your business while working from home

The Covid-19 pandemic and national lockdown have had an enormous impact on the country and businesses as a whole. Non-essential companies have had to cease operations abruptly, and those permitted to operate under national lockdown regulations have had to acclimatise to working from home. It may seem bleak for small business owners, but this will be a real test of how malleable you are to change, and the most agile will survive.



Thomas Vollrath, CEO at 1-grid

"Entrepreneurs, you must not be discouraged by this health pandemic. See this as an opportunity to improve different facets of your business. Like your digital presence, which includes both your website and social media platforms", says Thomas Vollrath, CEO at 1-grid.

Due to the lockdown, individuals will have to remain in their households for the duration. But what does this mean for business owners? How about you take this time to work on previously parked or neglected tasks?

These should be your key focuses during the lockdown:

- **Work on your online presence**

The [Global Digital Yearbook for 2019](#) published by We Are Social, and Hootsuite reveals that South African users were spending more than 8 hours and 25 minutes online per day. This figure is higher than the global average of 6 hours and 41 minutes. After the lockdown announcement in late March, we will see a spike in this number as users are confined to their homes and encouraged to be social, virtually.

- **Get a website or improve on your existing one**

Improving your online presence starts with having an accessible website for your business. If you don't have one already, start by registering your business domain and getting web hosting from a reliable service provider so your website can be live on the internet. If you have a website already, make it easy to navigate and ensure that the

messaging is clear and concise. The design elements and user experience are essential because customers judge a business by the website.

- **Get social while distancing**

Social media is your direct line of contact with your existing and potential customers. Your social media accounts have to speak to your brand image. Post regularly at crucial times of the day to get the most engagement. It is an opportune time to be accessible. Provide your customers with information about Covid-19 and your business offerings via your social media platforms.

- **Email more often>**

Remote or not, follow up with customers; suppliers and colleagues or work on those campaigns that you didn't have time to execute. By remaining virtually social, you stay at the forefront of people's minds. Emailing consumes a large portion of South African user's time, and the benefit of email is that it provides a measurement of your efforts.

- **Improve communication within your business**

Does your business communicate effectively via email? It is vital to ensure that your business has an email product that is suitable for your business model to ensure seamless communication.

If you are still using a @gmail.com or @yahoo.com email, you should consider utilising platforms that provide you with tools like collaboration; synchronization; storage – including cloud storage; remote access; a robust HTML editor; anti-virus protection and minimal complications with mail exchanges.

- **Plan your next move**

Apart from communicating with your customers and team, you should be thinking of your next customer offering. Consumers are going to be cash strapped coming out of this. Many people have been left unemployed or have taken unpaid leave. For those that will not receive a monthly income, the South African government has put funding measures in place.

Vollrath observes that "as business owners, with the ability to do so, we should be thinking of how we can give back to our customers who have supported us. At 1-grid, we have offered our support by providing existing customers with discounted offerings and opened up communication with small businesses that need support. As a business, we are investing in improved service delivery to enhance their ability to succeed".

- **Virtual meetings**

Human beings thrive off of social interaction and connection. Physical contact is limited, and this is the time to sharpen your digital knowledge and start investigating. Numerous virtual communication platforms are available like Slack; Zoom; Microsoft Teams; Google Hangouts and Skype, to name a few. These all enable us to video call and engage with our customers, suppliers and employees.

- **Virtual conferences; video series or launching a workshop**

If your product or service requires a demo or explanation, create interactive content for your customers and followers. With the latest features on Instagram, you also can conduct a live series whereby your followers can engage with you in real-time. Customer engagement is currency and brands that get that balance right, thrive.

If demos or workshops are not suited to your business, use the time to speak to your customers and followers on a real-time basis. Host focus groups on calls, ask your customers what they value from your product or service offering, and what requires improvement. This primary research will provide you with invaluable insights about your business. From this feedback, you can adjust or tweak your strategies and have a cohesive plan when business as usual resumes.

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