3 ways digital marketing agencies will change due to COVID-19

If you own an agency, or are with an agency, you are probably wondering how things will change due to COVID-19. I've spent a good amount of time thinking about this and here is what I predict will happen.

1. Strategy with change

Everything a digital marketing agency does starts with their strategy, so I think it is important we address this first.

How it will change

There have been clear changes to supply and demand online. The product market fit has also been modified for almost every category on some level due to the ripple effect of COVID-19. Because of this, agencies are going to have to look at themselves and their clients through the following lenses:

- How has the need of their customer base changed?
- How have their budgets changed?
- Are they still a good customer target?
- Should they target a different customer profile?
- Do they still have the right services to help those customers?

Agencies need to look at their own product market fit and that of their customers. This will be a major exercise through the rest of 2020.

How to win

You need to take a closer look at your customer and refine

your strategy around their new pain points.

For example, we have seen searches drop dramatically for “near me” terms and spike for “delivery” terms. We have seen YouTube grow 15% in traffic, while at the same time ad revenue has gone down.

Agencies will need to modify the way they take clients to market, their services and pricing for doing so.

Bonus: Immediate tips for how digital agencies should update client strategy

- A page on their website directly addressing COVID-19 and how they are helping customers. This should be visible on every page of the site. It should also give an update on any changes to the business.
- They need to bring their new messaging strategy to their advertising creatives, their content marketing and email marketing teams, and TV and radio.
- They need to run a campaign that clearly states how they are helping their customer – and they need to track the results. If the results are good, they can tout how they helped customers in a follow-up marketing campaign later in 2020.

2. Organization

There is no doubt that the way organizations operate will change in the short-term due to this. Agencies are no exception.

How they will change

With everyone working remote, you can expect employees and employers to get used to this. Rent is not cheap, and in general, agency profitability is low. In most cases, agencies

have net profits between 5% and 30% and rent is a big part of that cost as the agency often likes to have a nice office to attract staff and wow customers. If customers don’t want to meet in their office and the staff want to work from home, this means big savings for the company. The best part is that this money can be used to invest more in client success and employee success.

But not having an office brings other large challenges: lack of team/company culture, lack of community, collaboration and so much more. I personally love having an office and seeing our team every day. Without one, agency owners may have management challenges and will need processes and accountability, such as:

- Time tracking on clients
- Daily check-ins with team
- Weekly accountability

How to win

This is up to each agency owner to decide, and time will tell how important the office is long term. But for now, a few things that will help are video calls including:

- Non-work related items, such as happy hours or chatting for team building
- And then, of course, multiple department check-ins each week

3. Communication

For agencies, client communication is going to change.

How it will change

Clients generally love in-person meetings at their office or our office. They also enjoy lunch, coffee or happy hour. That all has gone out the window now. This places a necessity for

everyone still to show up to those meetings just as they would in-person, but via video call.

How to win

You need to show up to the video call dressed fairly nice, with some decent lighting and a background that is presentable. I believe a nice set-up here will go a very long way with clients. The video call is an experience, so this becomes an entirely new skill set. I expect to see a spike in custom video backgrounds for company employees.

Imagine you're doing a video call with a staff member at our company. One call has someone in a sweatshirt, hair all messed up, poor lighting, and in the background you see their laundry all over the floor.

Now imagine that same call with someone who has taken the time to put on a nice shirt, brush their hair, has clear lighting on their face and the background is a whiteboard with the company logo on it so they can write things down and brainstorm. During the meeting, you see your digital marketing strategy written down each week and delivered back to you. This is an entirely different experience – one that you've grown to expect in a professional environment.

Conclusion

COVID-19 almost seems unreal due to the magnitude of impact it has had on the world, but we will get through it and come out stronger. As we progress, it is important to adapt – and agencies are no exception. For agencies, think about your new customer needs, employee needs and communication strategy. For those who use agencies, we agency owners appreciate you.

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