One of the most important areas of your business to carefully analyze during a crisis is your marketing and sales strategies. A crisis presents a great opportunity to adjust your messaging and tactics to better address the new problems and challenges that have become “top of mind” for your customers.

One of the biggest mistakes companies make is leaving their current marketing and sales strategies on autopilot, or worse yet, reducing their marketing and sales activity.

Marketing strategies should shift to:

- content marketing that focuses on discussing, analyzing and solving problems versus promoting products,
- integrating more direct response tactics,
- and utilizing more digital marketing channels like your website, blogs, social media, and using landing pages to capture leads and deliver content.

The first thing you should do is shift your marketing messaging from platitude type themes like quality, price and service, and focus more on calling out specific pain points your customers are experiencing, then positioning your company as a trusted resource to help them alleviate pain.

Here are two great questions to help you adjust your marketing messaging:

1. What is one major problem your customers are facing right now?
2. What is one big outcome they want right now?

When people are considering some form of purchase to solve a problem or seize an opportunity, the two major questions in their mind which your marketing needs to answer are:

1. Why should we buy your product or service?
2. Why should we buy it from you?

To answer the “Why should we buy your product or service?” question, you need to develop and communicate a VALUE PROPOSITION. The value proposition is a clear statement of the specific benefits they will gain by doing business with you.

To answer the “Why should we buy it from you?” question, you need to develop and communicate a crystal clear UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION. The unique selling proposition is a clear statement of what makes you your company and/or your product or services different and superior to other providers.

Once you have solid answers to the four questions in this article, your next step is to use content marketing and take an educational approach to discuss problems, desired outcomes, benefits and points of differentiation. Articles, white papers, case studies, and FAQ lists can all play a big role in your strategy.
Shifting your sales strategies should include more collaboration and less sales pitches. The basis of your selling strategies should be a well-structured questioning process that seeks to understand and makes the customer feel like they are part of finding the solution. Your question plan should include:

- a thorough situational analysis,
- identification of the customer pain points,
- discussion of the implication and impact of these pain points,
- gaining insight as to how pressing the need is,
- understanding the buying influence team and buying process, budgeting issues, and the urgency or timeframe to solve the problem.

Because companies may be fearful about spending, your ability to present clear, honest, and accurate cost-justification will be more important than ever before. One of the key things you’ll have to understand in the buying analysis process is whether they tend to use cost of acquisition or cost of ownership to make the decision and be able to shift your approach when necessary.

Also, flexibility will be more important than ever in terms of adding more value to the purchase, potentially offering discounts, and extended and creative financing terms may all help reduce the fear of parting with cash and make a buying decision easier.

Finally, you will probably have to interact with more people in the customer’s organization than before, so your ability to manage multiple personalities and perspectives will be important.

By following the suggestions made in this article, you will be able to quickly make the adjustments necessary to be sure that your marketing and sales processes are in alignment with market conditions.