

How to Bounce Back Your Business in 2021



As we continue to move forward in 2021, business owners the world over are looking for ways to overcome the obstacles thrown in their path by a global pandemic, widespread closures and economic hurdles the size of Mt. Etna. If you're hoping to get back on track ASAP, check out these tips for helping your business bounce back in 2021 and see what steps you can take to take back your professional and financial future.



Announce Your Reopening, Important Changes or New Business Vision

When it seemed like the world ground to a halt in mid-March, some businesses staved off permanent closures by finding ways to adapt. Reduced hours, bare-bones staffing, offering virtual shopping experiences and curbside pickup kept lucky businesses running, but others chose to hit the pause button and suspend business altogether until the viral infection rates dropped into more reasonable territory.

So what happens when 2021 finally gets some sense and you're ready to open up shop and introduce or reintroduce friends, family and customers to your business? Here's a hint: If there's a grand reopening and nobody knows about it, did it even happen? Answer: Not so much. But you can get the word out and make your reopening super special, even if you can't expect an actual crowd.

Announcements & Invitations

Send out an announcement detailing your reopening/expansion date, any sort of specials you're offering as part of the celebration and a few teaser pictures of the service or product you're selling. As for invitations, it's okay to recognize that large gatherings aren't truly safe at the moment and still want to share the joy. Reopening your business after a major slump (especially one that was caused by outside factors) is a major feat.

Instead of throwing a party, throw a virtual celebration. Send a special discount code with your announcement, send an invitation with a custom magnet, decal, sticker or keychain inside or "invite" guests to shop online and see your new ecommerce platform. The idea is to spread the enthusiasm and generate buzz.

Think beyond what a traditional announcement or invitation can be and use those methods to encourage shoppers to come back and support small business.

Banners and Exterior Signage

For businesses with a brick-and-mortar location, hanging banners and signs on the outside of the building can trumpet an important message to everyone passing by. A huge pop-up banner declaring "Hot Pizza!" or "Now Open" seems simple, but add your brand colors, a gorgeous picture of a hot slice of pepperoni pie and a few key pieces of information like your store hours and you've not-so-subtly imprinted your business on pedestrians' brains.

Every Door Direct Mail - You Don't Want to Miss This One!

EDDM is one of the best-kept secrets of business marketing. But before we dig into what Every Door Direct Mail is, let's have a few quick reminders about how incredibly impactful direct mail can be overall.

- *Email has a paltry lifespan of just 17 seconds compared to direct mail's average lifespan of an applause-worthy 17 days (this statistic is so nice you're going to see it twice!)*¹
- *Nearly three-fourths of Americans say they prefer brands contact them via direct mail so they can read through information on their own timeline*²
- *59% of Americans surveyed enjoy getting direct mail that introduces them to new products*²
- *People generally open just 20-30% of their emails, but they open as much as 90% of their direct mail*¹
- *Over two-thirds of marketers said combining digital and direct mail lead to increased website visits*¹



- 1) Direct mail is still one of the most effective tools in your marketing arsenal
- 2) Even if you're a digital marketing enthusiast, direct mail deserves a prominent place in your overall marketing strategy
- 3) Using direct mail and digital channels together will benefit your business exponentially

Okay, now back to Every Door Direct Mail. Minuteman Press has partnered with the USPS to offer a game-changing service. You can send out anywhere from 500 to 5,000 pieces of direct mail — think postcards, large flyers (those are particularly effective if you're reaching out to consumers for the first time) and brochures — per day, per zip code. USPS carriers will take them to every mailbox on their route. You don't need a single mailing address, which takes a huge chunk of work off your plate.

For less than one-third the cost of a first-class stamp per piece mailed, you can reach out to an entire community and let them know you're open for business, following safety protocols and eager to welcome new and existing customers with open arms (figuratively speaking, of course).

Showcase Your Commitment to Safety

Some businesses can operate under no-contact orders or just prefer to do so because it's not necessary to meet with customers in person. Other businesses don't have that option. If you rely on bringing people into a brick-and-mortar location, it's vital you change your set up to reflect current CDC guidelines (check out requirements at the state and local levels too). Once that's done, make sure everyone knows what steps you're taking and what you expect of anyone who enters your store.

And just in case you're confused as to whether COVID-related signage can really be classified as marketing, check this out:

- **As of February 2021, only 43% of Americans are currently comfortable going to a shopping mall³**
- **Just over one-third of Americans think it's safe to go out to eat⁴**
- **Posting such signage made 65% of those responding to a May 2020 survey feel either "much more comfortable" or "somewhat more comfortable" — and comfort equals a greater likelihood to spend money⁵**

Signage

Social distancing printing like floor markers indicating six feet of distance and wall decals reminding people to stay six feet apart can help you maintain order and control crowds.

These signs should be in every brick-and-mortar consumer-facing business, but they may be especially useful for service-based businesses and essential services that only work when the customer is physically present. For instance, doctor's offices and gas stations can't do curbside pickup, so it's a guarantee that if the doors are open, people will come inside. Using signs to indicate that masks and social distancing are required and help people protect themselves and others can contribute to lowering customer anxiety and keeping day-to-day operations running as smoothly as possible.



Apparel

You may not think of company apparel as being COVID-related, but when people are intensely focused on cleanliness and order, having your team wear similar clothing can make them seem more professional. In addition to customizing basic clothing options like golf shirts, polo shirts, hats, sweatshirts, sunglasses and more formal uniform options, you can also get custom face masks. CDC guidelines still advise wearing a mask in most public settings and that includes health care facilities, retail establishments, grocery stores and even gyms. The same goes for entrepreneurs with a home service business like dog walkers, plumbers, electricians, house cleaners, painters and so on.



Branding your team's masks with the company logo, name and/or a relevant phrase only adds to your professionalism while advertising your business. Like all branded merchandise, masks can be added to an on-site store or ecommerce site if you think customers might be interested in repping your brand.

Door Hangers

If you serve a specific geographic area or want to increase your coverage in a certain zone, door hangers offer a way to bring your business information directly to those consumers. Say you install custom closets. After you finish a job and your client is brimming with happiness, take a moment to walk the street and stick your gorgeous, professionally printed door hangers on the neighbors' front knobs. It's a less invasive form of cold knocking; you aren't actually disturbing anyone (though you can certainly engage with people who may be in their driveway and seem open to a conversation), and your hanger is there waiting for people when they come home.

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- ✓ *Add a personal touch, like a quote from the owner or even a picture to humanize your business and help set it apart from the "big guys"*
- ✓ *Include some kind of deal, like an introductory offer, free consultation or a discounted service bundle*
- ✓ *Be consistent with your marketing, including sticking to your brand colors and messaging so your door hanger is in line with your website and other printed materials*
- ✓ *Use power words like new, safe, results, value, free, amazing, easy, proven, powerful, guaranteed, discover, endorsed, certified and now to give your collateral heft and help increase excitement as well as consumer confidence*

Focus On Your Existing Customers

Experts say it costs about five times more to acquire a new customer than it does to retain an existing one. That's already very telling, but add to that the fact that the sales rate for existing customers being around 12 times better than the success rate of selling to a newbie and things really get interesting.⁷ If you want to save money while also increasing revenue, focus on the customers who already know and love your brand.



Let Them Know You're Open For Business

The pandemic has thrown a wrench in everybody's works. Up is down, down is up and just because you used to be open Monday through Friday from noon to 8pm doesn't mean you still are. In fact, as of late-September 2020, almost 100,000 businesses in the U.S. have shut down permanently as a result of the spread of COVID-19.⁸ It's wonderful that you're not one of them, but you have to let everyone know you aren't a statistic.

If you have an existing e-mail list, send out a message reminding everyone that you're still here. You can also use direct mail, which gives loyal followers a reminder they can physically hold on to. It could be a brochure that introduces your pared down curbside carryout menu or a flyer that details your sanitation measures and how people can safely shop, get their hair cut or drop off their clothes for dry cleaning.

And don't neglect social media.

Post frequently, announcing any changes in hours of operation immediately. This is the time to be reliable and transparent — people already feel uncomfortable enough, so positioning your business as a source of stability and strength is paramount.

Ask for Feedback

The world is weird, and that means people are shopping, running errands and taking care of themselves in a very different way than they used to. Not everyone has the same idea of what a shopping or dining experience should look like. While obviously all businesses should adhere to local regulations as well as CDC guidelines, there may be other steps you can take to make guests feel safe and welcome. How do you figure that out? Ask them what they need.

There are plenty of online tools designed for conducting a survey. You can email out a link, the app will compile the results and then take action as needed. A simpler way is to use the poll feature on your social media account, but be aware that you'll only get answers from the people who see your posts and thanks to certain algorithms getting enough reach can be tricky.

Ask for Reviews

QUICK FACT:

Every time your Yelp rating increases by a star, your revenue stands to increase by 5-9%.⁹ That's impressive. Getting great reviews requires giving great service and offering a stellar product, but it also requires getting happy customers to tell the world how happy they really are.

Every time you have a positive interaction with a customer, mention how grateful you'd be if they shared their experience with the world. Point them to specific review sites if you need help on one more than the others (Google vs. Yelp, for instance). You can include the link in an order follow-up email, or better yet use direct mail. Reach out to all your customers with a postcard that thanks them for their business and asks them to help you survive this pandemic by bolstering your reputation online. No need to give anything in return for a positive review (that's actually a big no-no), *just ask nicely*. Make it easy by printing a QR code on the postcard that customers can quickly scan with their smartphones. No pesky typing of URLs and the convenience means they're more likely to post a review ASAP instead of setting aside the postcard and getting distracted by other things.



Consider Launching or Expanding Ecommerce Operations

Brand loyalty has long been a good indicator of how healthy a business is overall. When people are loyal to a brand, it means they're more likely to buy repeatedly and act as an ambassador, telling others about the brand. But the pandemic has changed that. There's been a marked increase in consumers' willingness to stray from the brands they love. A desire for more convenience and better value is enough to inspire change, which means your business has to change too.

If you're not already selling online and ecommerce can fit in with your business model, by all means start. A whopping 75% of Americans have tried a new shopping behavior and only 24% feel safe engaging in activities outside their home that would have been deemed normal pre-pandemic.¹⁰ It's no surprise then that online spending in May 2020 was up a staggering 77% versus the same time period the year before.¹¹

By the way, **BOPIS** (a fancy acronym for "Buy Online, Pick Up In-Store") leaped by 195% in May 2020.¹¹ It's the best of both worlds — people do the ordering online and minimize their time in public, but they still get a little bit of human interaction as they grab their groceries, holiday PJs or handmade dog treats.

Refresh Your Printed Materials

Using the same marketing collateral might feel safe, but it's better to feel fresh. Your business has changed over the last year, and your materials should reflect that. Gather your postcards, brochures, business cards, menus, rack cards and other goodies and look at them with a critical eye, then ask yourself these questions:

Do the printed materials you have make you excited to book an appointment or buy your product?

Is all the information still accurate?

Are you happy with the colors, fonts and imaging?

Is the level of quality in line with how you want to present your business?

Could it be better?

Distributing door hangers and tucking business cards into packages before shipping them can help you gain brand recognition and build traction. Or, if the door hangers and business cards look rough or have the wrong email address, the effect could be significantly less desirable.

As you look to regain your footing in 2021, give your business the right foundation by putting your best foot forward. That may mean making tweaks to your existing brochure design and ordering a quick reprint, or you may be better served by consulting with a graphic design and print expert, listening to their advice and designing new collateral from scratch.

Show the mock-ups to a neutral third-party. Do they like the colors? Do they understand your business/offer? Is it clear how they can reach you or place an order? If you can answer "yes" to all of the above, you're in great shape.

Look Into Alternatives to Dining In

Restaurants have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. When widespread stay-at-home orders and state and local mandates forced eateries to shut their doors to dine-in guests or severely restrict capacity, those businesses were forced to pivot. Some managed the change in direction with few hiccups are still trying to find their footing months later due to lack of manpower or issues with the logistics related to a brand adjustment.



Even if the pandemic disappears overnight, it could take a while for customers to feel comfortable eating out with pre-COVID frequency. Staying afloat may require adjusting what it means to feed the public. Think about reworking your indoor setup to include fewer sit-down spots and more stations for taking to-do orders, packing up food and staging bags for front door or curbside pickup.

To make this transition as professional as possible, invest in branded containers. You can put your name and logo on everything from pizza boxes to sandwich wraps to to-go bags. Not only does that boost your perceived value and make your eatery seem more trustworthy, the bags pull double-duty as portable advertisements. As customers carry their pasta specials to their car or open up their chicken Caesar salads in the socially distanced lunchroom at work, other people will see your branding, smell the delicious aroma of that mushroom swiss burger, and place their own order ASAP.

Fine-Tune Your Online Presence

There's no telling when people will be ready to resume their on-the-go lifestyles, but even before the COVID-19 pandemic mobile search was massively important. In 2021, it's almost impossible for a business to survive, let alone thrive, without an online presence. For organizations looking to scale (or at least dig themselves out of the hole created by the events of 2020), building online presence can help you:

Stay Competitive

Let's pretend you're dead set against taking your company online. Maybe technology just isn't your thing. Maybe you're concerned about investing in digital infrastructure. Maybe you think social media is stupid. While those are all valid opinions, while you're standing your ground, your competitors are setting up shop online and taking away your business. Just existing on Facebook, Google and Instagram can create legitimacy and help level the playing field.

Reach a Wider Audience

There are just under 7.6 billion people in the world, and about 4.66 billion of them are active internet users.¹² While not every one of those 4.66 billion people are going to be your ideal customer, the internet connects you with potential customers who may not have otherwise heard about your brand because of geographic location or other restrictions.

Strategize More Targeted Marketing

When you run ads on Facebook or via Google, you can create custom audiences based on everything from where people live to how much money they make to what they like to do. Instead of papering the entire world with your ad for high-end glittery stilettos and paying a hefty price for the privilege, you can target women between the ages of 20-60 who like or visit your competitors' shoe stores and live in the top 25% of wealthiest zip codes.

Stay Agile

The times they are a changin'... and changin'... and changing'. We live in a world that's in constant flux, and what works for your customers and business today may not be a home run tomorrow. Being online allows you to adapt to change quickly and share information about those adaptations immediately. Printed messaging lasts longer (emails "die" in just a few seconds while the average lifespan for direct mail is 17 days), but digital messaging works for last-minute changes like if you have to close early or want to offer a flash special.¹³

Claim and Monitor Your Business on Review Sites

**Yelpers
are gonna
Yelp.**

In other words, people are going to write reviews whether you like it or not, so you might as well do what you can to help shape the narrative. That doesn't mean attempting to influence what people post in any nefarious kind of way, but rather ensuring that you're delivering excellent experiences every day and keeping the lines of communication open and responding to feedback whether it's good or bad.

If you get an online review with one star due to long wait times, take a moment to answer with an explanation as to why that happened (maybe you're short-staffed because of COVID or the phone system was down and calls weren't cycling through for pickup properly). Promise to do better and welcome the reviewer back with assurances you'll do better next time. This is called reputation management, and it's a powerful marketing tool. The reviewer knows they're being heard, and everyone else reading the reviews knows you care enough about your business and customers to address complaints and make improvements.

There are hundreds of ways to market your business, but when money is tight and you're coming off a year full of unprecedented events, it's important to use your money and your time wisely. Take advantage of the marketing tips above to help your business bounce back in 2021. It's what you and your brand deserve.