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MORE ON ADVERTISING **Crisis Management Tips for a Small Business**

ZDnet.com offers crisis management tips for small businesses. To be an effective example to those you are around, stay calm and confident, while taking precautions. I'm hoping one or two of these thoughts will give your ad salespeople some ideas of how they might approach their advertisers in the midst of the unknown.

PROVIDE REASSURANCE.

Everybody's life is being disrupted. Some more unfairly than others. In your online and social media presence, spread a message of optimism, about getting through this as a community. Also, equally important, that your place of business is taking extra precautions to maintain a clean environment (and mean it).

PEOPLE ARE CRAVING FOR SOME NORMALCY TO RETURN.

Help provide some of that for them. Customers' routines are disrupted. Level up your customer service game by having a remote / off-premise service game plan.

REACH OUT TO YOUR LENDERS TO NEGOTIATE SHORT-TERM RELIEF.

This could either be in the form of deferred payments or extended credit lines. The median small business holds 27 cash buffer days in reserve. Government agencies have announced several relief programs, which make it easier for lenders to have these conversations with small businesses. But as a small business owner, you need to be proactive in reaching out before the situation snowballs into a bigger financial challenge.

REACH OUT TO YOUR VENDORS TO CONFIRM SUPPLY CONTINUITY.

Some of these could be small businesses as well and could be facing their own hardships. Some of them could offer you deferred payment terms as well. And while you are at it, please consider doing the same for your customers if you happen to be a business-to-business shop.

DISCOUNTS ARE A WIN-WIN.

While discounts are typically used as an instrument to promote store traffic, remember that several of your customers may have had their employment hours cut and are probably facing a personal cash flow crunch. Any discounts that help customers manage their expenses better, even for a short while, is bound to earn you loyalty in the long run.

WEAR GLOVES. (For food service businesses.)

While this may seem obvious, it may be tempting to do this only while handling food or any consumables. All employees should wear gloves, especially at the point of sale -- you want your customers to be comfortable with the physical proximity of exchanging cash at the point of transaction. You can also place floor markers to show a minimum separation per social distancing guidelines (6 to 10 feet) while patrons are in your business for pickup and delivery.

BE EMPATHETIC IN REDUCING EMPLOYEE HOURS.

You may reach a stage where some of your employees' hours will need to be reduced. Talk to your employees about their situation. You may be pleasantly surprised by the solidarity that people display during tough times, by self electing to reduced hours, thereby saving you from cutting down the hours for those who may be more dependent on the income from your business.

FLOOR MARKERS IN STORES PROVIDE REINFORCEMENT FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES.

As active contributing members of your respective communities, please consider shopping small and local during this time of crisis, while prioritizing your safety and well-being.