



Flexible, Digital, Sustainable

Marketing Strategies for
the Next Phase

**LONGVIEW
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Introduction

Reinvention was the name of the game in 2020, as the world adjusted to a sudden and universal pandemic-inspired business evolution.

Marketing strategy in particular was critical to help companies keep growing, promote adjustments to their model, and always be ready for a quick pivot.

Guess what? Time to do it again. But now businesses are empowered with the benefit of experience: a year of balancing short-term agility with long-term vision will serve everyone well.

The theme of sustainability emerged as a significant part of the equation. Employee treatment, health concerns, climate risk, diversity, equity and inclusion...all these issues coalesced into a powerful demand coming from all corners of the marketplace: your company

is part of a broader ecosystem. Show us how and why you can lead us through it.

Of course, the core of such a message is rooted in the company itself. Embracing sustainability – and understanding that it goes hand in hand with risk management and, therefore, with profit – is the first step. Building an authentic marketing and communications strategy around that message then becomes critical.

Marketing strategy during a once-in-a-lifetime (we hope) health crisis is different than marketing in a world waking up from such an event.





Heading for the second half of 2021, businesses should be developing initiatives that consider the increasingly mainstream focus on sustainability and how their clients/customers will engage with their brand.

Consider three strategic elements as you plan:

1. A quick-shift mindset
2. A message that is authentic and considers the bigger picture
3. Maximizing the new digital normal

Investing in marketing for the near term, building vision for the long term

In 2020, companies grew accustomed to a “what will work for me now” mentality. That approach has a shelf life. You can’t achieve your long-term goals if you’re continuously jumping from tactic to tactic.

That said, last year may also have wiped out any tendency to “set it and forget it,” which was not historically unusual in marketing for finance and professional services. A measured pace for marketing programs has benefits, however it must also move quickly enough and be adaptable enough to engage with audiences in real time.

To find the middle ground, companies need to consider the potential arc of the business over the next 1, 3, and 5 years, and develop a marketing plan that can run in short bursts, be measured, and be adapted based on lessons learned.

This focus on a marketing function that is more adaptable and more valued is a direct result of the past year. In fact, a Q1 survey by Deloitte found that over the past year, 72.2% of marketers reported that the **importance of marketing** within their organizations has increased over the past year. The survey found that “increased demand from customers for strong digital experiences has positioned marketing as a key player to deliver direction and growth.”

With such a tremendous reliance on the digital space, businesses saw that smart marketing programs were built on strong, relevant content that could be effectively distributed through digital channels. The key is determining how to authentically connect with the audience by delivering the messages that matter in the channels they trust. Success is then achieved through a steady pattern of test, retrench, advance, test, retrench, advance.



The key to maximizing marketing going forward? Understand that we're in a new phase of development. Set goals for the mid and long term, and in the short term invest accordingly in content and tactics that will create connections and carry the most weight.

Longview Case in Point

An immigration firm launched a digital strategy based largely on keeping its audience informed of the constant regulatory changes and travel restrictions put forth by the federal government in 2020. While valuable, they quickly learned that the pace of change was so fast that an additional layer was required: content to take a bigger picture view of what it means for companies and foreign workers to live with such uncertainty – especially at a time when employee welfare is of such high importance. The result was a more empathetic dialogue and higher engagement on selected social media channels.

Messaging for a wary audience



Trust is a major factor in marketing. This was true before the pandemic and was amplified tenfold by the nature of living in unpredictable, stress-laden times. The theme of credibility and reliability is not going away, and marketing initiatives need to embrace that. An authentic message that promotes confidence and empathy is perhaps the most important component for businesses examining their current state.

The Harvard Business Review touched on this in an exploration of a recent report from Ernst & Young.

“While quality, convenience, and price still very much matter to consumer choice, factors like sustainability, trust, ethical sourcing, and social responsibility are increasingly important to how consumers select their products and services.”

- Ernst & Young

Companies that dismiss these audience trends will quickly see the effects.

Brand loyalty is no longer about nostalgia and habit, emotional drivers that served as pillars of marketing for decades. Now, audiences choose a provider based on trust and values alignment.

McKinsey took a pulse on loyalty as part of its survey on consumer sentiment during the pandemic. The results speak volumes.



“Of the three quarters of Americans who changed their shopping behavior since COVID-19 began, around 40 percent say they have changed brands, with the level of brand switching doubling in 2020 compared to 2019... Convenience and value have been the main drivers of shopping behavior change; however, quality and seeking brands that match with their values also inspire change for about 40 percent of younger consumers.”

- McKinsey & Company

Marketing strategy is built on a thoughtful message. Develop a roadmap of key phrases that capture the strengths of your business and services in the context of your audience's needs and values. Consistent use of your messaging will serve as a crucial component of successful brand awareness and engagement.

Longview Case in Point

An accounting and consulting firm with deep roots in the nonprofit sector built its brand on community engagement and support. As the pandemic unfolded and diversity, equity & inclusion rose to the foreground in 2020, the company was able to expand its message to put even greater emphasis on the authentic embrace of its role as a supportive employer and partner. This led to national industry recognition as a leader and progressive partner, helping to bolster the firm's continued growth.

Don't look back from the digital paradigm

For obvious reasons, digital marketing was the only game in town in 2020. This was a shift for some sectors, especially in the conservative arenas of finance and professional services.

It was a forced evolution that was overdue, and there are no backsies. Those businesses that did not refresh, retool, or refine their website in 2020 should certainly be considering it now. The expectation among nearly all audiences is that the digital presence reflects the company's brand – bringing the marketing function right back to strategy and message. The website is likely hurting the brand if it does not accurately convey the company's message, is not easily navigable, is not centered on relevant content, and is not optimized for online search.



“ Many organizations have made significant investments to continue to expand their digital marketing capabilities, and website optimization has been the main focus, with 73.8% of organizations reporting investment.”

- Deloitte Survey

A more advanced digital presence opens new doors with an audience that is fully acclimated. Consumers are fully acclimated to educating themselves online. They conduct their research there, seek online advice from friends and colleagues, and self-select into companies and services that align with their personas.

There was still a contingent of marketing wisdom that clung to the idea that a generalist message and marketing strategy was the safest path. No more. Trying to be all thing to all people is a dangerous choice, and business should be focused on how to connect and engage with audiences that relate to their brand.

The world is fully digitally connected, and it's going to stay that way. Companies should maximize their digital presence and focus on targeted initiatives that will appeal to a specific, self-selecting audience. They can then measure, adjust, and continuously improve their content and distribution.

Longview Case in Point

An investment manager that was historically focused on socially responsible investing saw an unmistakable shift in its audience's mindset. A growing cadre of mainstream investors was seeking trustworthy providers with a track record of using Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) tools to create value in portfolios and address societal issues. The firm embarked on a measurable digital initiative to engage with this audience without losing connection with its existing, loyal client base of socially responsible investors. Using email and social media, the firm was able to expand its reach and test its influence among these prospective clients.

The recovery to pre-pandemic norms is in full swing.

The New York Times noted that a booming Q1 is pushing the U.S. towards a GDP in line with expectations had there been no pandemic. It's far from an even keeled economic landscape, though.

“That’s what makes the economy of 2021 so promising but also worrying. The boom is here. We just don’t know yet how bumpy the ride will be in trying to return to something that feels like full-fledged prosperity.”

-The New York Times

So the world will move from uncharted waters into more uncharted waters, applying newly attained wisdom to an environment that remains, for the time being, relatively unpredictable.

For those that embrace marketing strategy as a living, breathing part of the business, the time is right to step back and assess their direction. With an emphasis on flexibility, a deeper dive into digital channels, and a message that considers sustainability, forward-thinking companies can be prepared for the next phase of recovery.



Contact Us

To learn how Longview Strategies can help you develop flexible, digital, and sustainable marketing strategies through our Accelerator program, contact us:

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