

During this difficult time, every business has a chance to survive and do well again, one day soon. When you keep customers safe and confident—and still buying—you don't just improve your success, but you help the cause for everyone in the economy. A perfect outcome is not possible right now. But communicating to customers the steps you are taking to keep them safe can make a big difference.

## internal assessment

Whatever you communicate must be based on facts. Take a step back and understand safety measures you already have in place or what you can put in place. Key to consider is the fact that scientists are reporting that there are people being infected with COVID-19 from infected people who do not display any symptoms and who do not know that they are infected. (See [Centers for Disease Control.](#)) This sobering information can make customers even more fearful of close contact with businesses and merchants.

### **Assess possible transfer of viruses from a person's body to surfaces touched by others:**

1. Measures to clean doorknobs, light switches and the like, touched by employees or customers; antiviral cleaning materials used and frequency of use.
2. Measures to clean work surfaces; antiviral cleaning materials used and frequency of use.
3. Measures used by employees to cover hands and hair.

### **Assess possible transfer of viruses from a person's exhalation into air breathed by others:**

1. Air filtration (e.g. HVAC filters). Look up air filtration specifications if possible, particularly regarding the ability to filter particles the size of viruses. Any improvements in HVAC filtration will help.
2. Practices in place to keep employees and customers at a distance 6 feet or greater. (Check [Centers for Disease Control](#) for updated standards.)

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## proactive customer communications

Customers need to hear from you now and often. Use your existing marketing communications channels like your website, email, text, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

Use your personal voice, with a picture if possible. Use a conversational tone to tell your customers you care about their safety and the safety of your employees. Based on your internal assessment, explain what you are doing to keep people safe. Consider a video of you on your social media explaining these matters. (Sending a video link in a text or email is not considered useful because of the suspicion of links causing harm.)

Repeat your message in the same communication channel and across your other channels. People's inboxes and social media are too full at all times. Particularly now. People miss important messages unless they reoccur. Facebook and Instagram are set so only a fraction of followers see a given post (unless you pay to boost). Therefore, either boost or repeat your messages. (See this [article](#) from Inc. magazine on frequency of posts.)

## reactive customer communications

Because of natural human fear, your customers are canceling appointments, orders and contracts. Best practice for handling cancelations:

1. Make your first reaction sympathy for your customer's situation. Say you are sorry and that you understand whatever is limiting their desire or ability to continue. A great practice is to say that, if you were in the person's shoes, you might feel the same way. Mean it! People want to be heard. Your understanding may lift pressure and fear to a point where the previous "no" begins to soften or evaporate.
2. Remind your customer why they chose your business in the first place: the features and benefits of your product or service which they like. Keep this part very short.
3. Ask your customer if they may reconsider the "no."
4. If possible, suggest a compromise. For example, ask for a delay in delivery, for a partial order, or for breaking the product or service into smaller units, spread over time.
5. Avoid discounts, unless you get a "yes" and you want to offer a discount on the next product or service.
6. Thank your customer for whatever compromise you receive.
7. End the communication with:
  - a. Focus on good will for your customer now and in the future (this part is paramount)
  - b. Possibility of helping in the future with your product or service.

8. Schedule a time to follow up, if appropriate.