

10 Innovative
Ways to

CONNECT

With Customers
Online

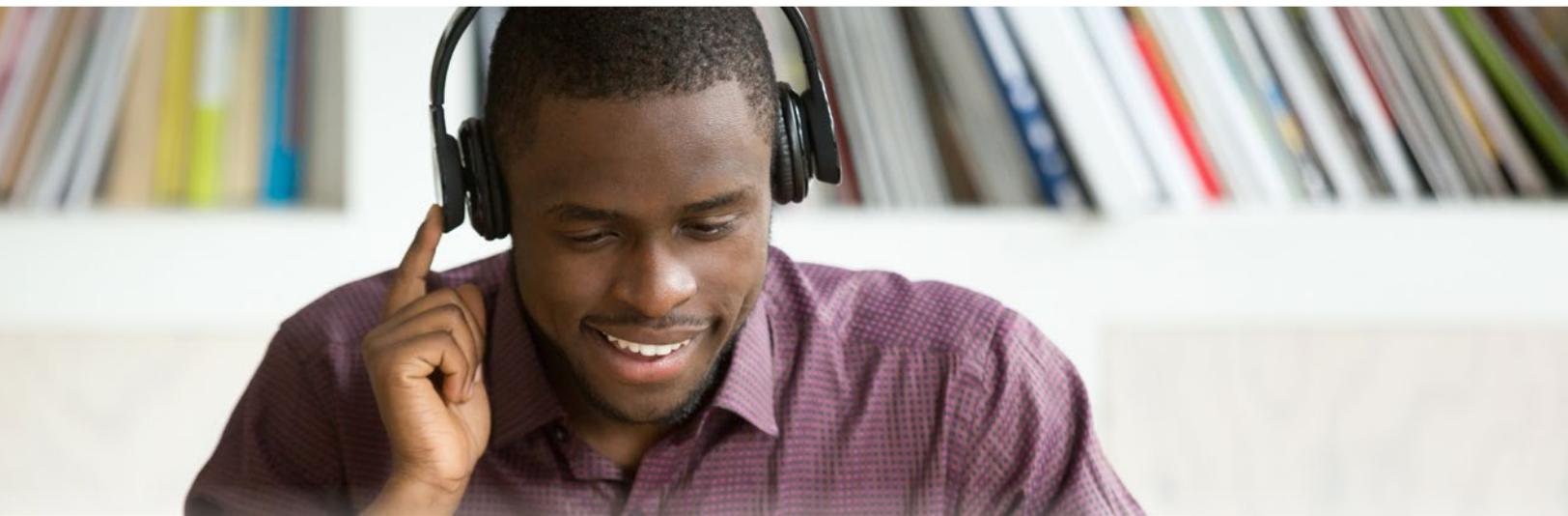


FOR THE LIFE OF YOUR BUSINESS

INTRODUCTION

In our digital world, it's critical that you connect with customers online as often as possible. And with the pandemic limiting in-person events, connecting online is critical to keeping your business growing. If you're already posting on social media and sending out an email or two each month, you're on the right track. However, that's not enough to keep customers interested and connected to your brand when they're bombarded with a sea of companies every time they log into their email or social media.

Still, your customers want you to connect with them. In fact, recent data from [Sprout Social](#) found that 64 percent of consumers want brands to connect with them and 70 percent feel more connected brands with CEOs that are active online.



Use these 10 ideas to keep the conversations with your customers going during and after the pandemic and see the sales coming in.

1. Live Stream Events or Updates

The future of online customer communication is Live. In April 2020, [Instagram saw a 70 percent increase in live streaming](#), as reported by Business Insider. If you're hesitant to dive into live streaming, wary of the time, money, and other resources required, you're in luck.

You don't need professional lighting and expensive camera equipment to reach out to customers. Just grab your phone or laptop, jump onto Facebook or Instagram Live, and start streaming!

Use this platform to share announcements or updates related to your business. Your customers will feel like they are talking with an old friend. Be open and vulnerable about challenges to make it even easier for customers to connect emotionally.

Build the Connection: Don't just livestream an event or update—engage with your customers and followers by asking questions and responding in real-time. This keeps them interested in the video while also giving you a chance to communicate directly with customers.

2. Host Virtual Meetups

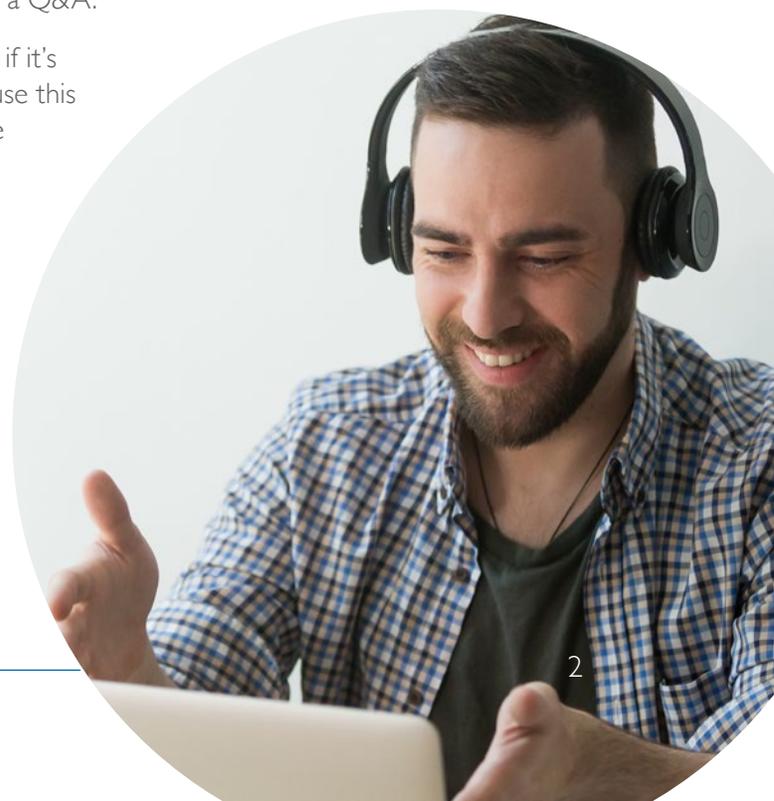
During Covid-19, friends connected via Zoom, Skype or other video chat apps, and groups of people have come together virtually to offer emotional support. You can be a community leader by bringing people together with virtual meetups. Host get-togethers with customers to share stories, offer advice, and connect on a deeper level.

If you're not sure what to gather about or what to do during the gathering, consider these simple ideas:

- Have an open discussion based on a specific topic.
- Invite a guest to speak and share.
- Have your owner or CEO address the group or do a Q&A.

Don't forget to promote the gathering on social media, if it's open to customers and the general public, so you can use this time to address those who already know you and those who may not yet.

Build the Connection: Send out VIP invites to your best or oldest customers and make sure they know they're getting a VIP invite. This allows you to make them feel special, which can encourage them to remain loyal for the long-term.



3. Offer Free Lessons

Many people are using the pandemic to learn new skills or keep up with hobbies now that they're stuck at home. As a business, you can stay top of mind with customers by offering lessons to guide them through their favorite activities.

For example, chef, author, and e-commerce seller, Emilie Raffa, offered a tutorial on how to make a sourdough starter. Follow her lead by posting your tutorial on your website and then teasing it on social media to drive traffic to your site.

If customers love this, consider making it a regular feature of your social media content. You can even poll customers to find out what recipes or foods they want to learn about to entice them to tune in.

Build the Connection: Send the video to your email list after publishing it. This is not only a smart way to repurpose your video content, but it also allows you to add value to your customers lives while encouraging them to connect with you on social media.

4. Share Videos

You don't have to go live to leverage the power of video. Share employee Q&A videos, talks from your CEO, or just behind-the-scenes videos of how your company does what it does. Even short videos can engage audiences and remind them that you still exist—and will be waiting once this is all over. Not to mention, they give your customers something to connect with—we're all going through this pandemic together, so remind them!

If applicable, turn your videos into an Instagram Video (IGTV) series. With each video being related to the next, or telling a chronological story, customers and followers are more likely to tune in when they see you've released a new one. Plus, they all live on your Instagram profile, so they can be re-watched at any time. They can also be shared to your other profiles and marketing mediums.

Build the Connection: Invite customers into your home. This intimate video reminds them that you're human too and allows you to start developing a deeper connection with your audience.



5. Update Your Website Content

Never underestimate the power of great website content to connect with customers. If you haven't given your web copy an update in a while, or haven't published any blog posts in recent months, now is the time to dive in. Give your customers something to connect with when they land on your website.

When updating, focus on telling a story that's engaging, that's on-brand, educational, and entertaining. For example, one tactic you can use is call-backs.

In [9 Lessons Content Writers Can Learn From Comedians](#), RightlyWritten explains that comedians always include a call-back, which is used to tie a routine together and build intimacy with the audience. What does this mean for your fresh website content? They explain:

"When crafting your conclusion, refer back to the opening statement to check if you gave a solution to every problem you introduced in your story." This closes the loop for readers, ensuring that you created a successful experience that they want to return back to.

Build the Connection: Ask customers for feedback on your new content. They'll appreciate you asking, and your website conversions may improve when you create copy based on what you know customers want to hear and see on your website.

6. Send Out Customer Surveys

If you aren't sure what your customers want, listen to them. Several theme parks, theaters, restaurants, and school systems sent out surveys during Covid-19 to understand the concerns of their customers. They could then implement changes to ensure customers felt safe and comfortable when they returned after lockdown.

Will your customers feel safe visiting your business? What steps do they expect your staff to take? Getting answers to these questions can help you plan for your re-opening and attracting as many customers as possible.

When sending surveys, consider the many platforms available to you, including [Google Forms](#), [SurveyMonkey](#), [Typeform](#) and [Survey on Facebook](#).

You may also have polling features built into your CRM system. For example, Zoho offers [Zoho surveys](#), which makes it easier to analyze the data alongside customer information.

Build the Connection: Make calls to your top customers and clients instead of sending a survey. Show them that you care deeply about their insights and want to have a genuine and authentic conversation.

7. Offer Giveaways and Host Contests

Host contests and giveaways to engage your customers. These can be immediate giveaways (i.e. a favorite product delivered in a contactless manner) or contests for events held once you re-open.

The key to driving engagement is offering something customers really want. To do so, consider your top-rated products, most popular dishes, or most-requested services—this will guide what you choose to give away.

When running the contest, commit to the promotion to drive entries. This means posting about the contest regularly for its duration all platforms. You may even want to promote it on your website and via email marketing to drive more interest. Don't forget about contest rules and regulations, which you can learn about in this guide from [Woobox](#).

Build the Connection: Personally thank everyone who entered the contest (if possible) so you don't end up being just another company they forget about after the contest is over. This is also a great chance to add extra value by sharing educational content or a smaller prize for simply entering.



8. Share Your “Secret Sauce”

Several food brands, from McDonald's to IKEA, have [released the secret recipes](#) to their top items during the pandemic, allowing home-bound customers to try recreating the flavors for themselves. You can do the same by sharing what makes your food taste amazing, what your top products are made of, or how customers can recreate your brand experience at home. They will shop with you once the pandemic is over because really, the secret sauce to doing it well is you!

You can even spin this into a new product line or service offering. For example, perhaps you develop a DIY kit that customers can buy to make their favorite dishes at home. This leads to long-term revenue and gives your business something to offer that sets you apart.

Build the Connection: Share your secret sauce from your own kitchen. Bring customers into your space, where you cook for your closest family and friends so it feels like a conversation between friends.

9. Show That You Take Their Needs Seriously

Whether you're dealing with a global pandemic or living life in the "new normal," customers want to know that you're taking their needs seriously. During the 2020 pandemic, many people were wary that states were opening too quickly and that businesses weren't taking the steps to keep customers safe. One [Siena College Poll](#) released in late May 2020 found that 65 percent of New Yorkers believed moving too fast to reopen and risking a spike in Covid-19 cases would be worse than the economic impact of remaining closed.

Show customers that you're always listening to them—whether you're making a brand change, adding new products or managing a global crisis.

Build the Connection: Start a dialogue about opening procedures on social media. Share about what you plan to do and then include a CTA for customers to share their concerns or questions. Let them know they're being heard by commenting back and engaging in a conversation.

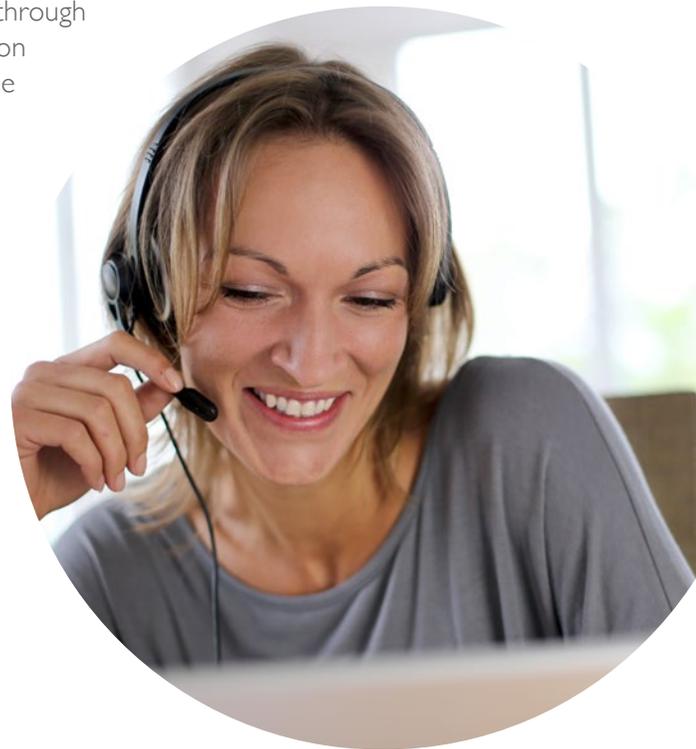
10. Answer Questions from Customers

Put customer care at the forefront of what you do by answering questions quickly and thoroughly when you can. Great customer service can be the difference between keeping a loyal patron and losing customers for life. In fact, Zendesk's 2020 report found that [57 percent of customers say customer service is an important factor in customer loyalty](#).

Don't forget to field questions on social media, in addition to through phone calls, contact forms, and email. Unanswered questions on social media are public and can hurt you if other customers see that.

To make this easier, integrate your social media platforms with your customer support tool—most now allow you to do this easily—so you're sure to see every message that comes in.

Build the Connection: Get personal with customer service. If talking online, have the customer service representative sign the message with their name, i.e.: "Great question, you can find that resource here: [link] - Brian." On calls, encourage employees to genuinely inquire about how the customer is doing and remind them to be open to sharing about their experience to deepen the relationship.



AND FINALLY...

Connect With Your Customers After Lockdown

Even when your business is fully operational, you may lose some customers because of the lockdown period. People lost their jobs and—in some cases—their loved ones. They will need to take time away to recover, and as they do, you can be there to connect, support, and empathize.



For additional coronavirus-related information, advice and ideas, visit: www.score.org/resilience