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(By Jamie Aplin) I'm so surprised that we're still hearing ads on the radio promoting a businesses product or service. But wait, isn't that precisely what radio ads should be doing? Typically, yes. But that all changed the day a world wide pandemic was announced. That was the day your typical car dealer ad, declaring zero percent financing should have been tossed out the window and replaced with an ad that resonates with our current reality.

This is not the appropriate time to promote your 50 percent off store-wide sale. If your advertisers continue to air commercials like this (or just don't change anything) they unfortunately will be remembered as irrelevant and incentive once we come out on the other side of this. Just like social distancing, changing your client's message isn't a

choice – it's imperative.

Ok. I've made my case and you're hopefully convinced. Now what? How do I craft an authentic, genuine advertising message that will be received with open arms during these challenging times?

Here are a few ideas to get you moving and it all starts with a phone call to your client.

1. Ask them questions about the origins of the business. If it's a family owned operation, this approach should work really well. Have them recall some happy memories or reflective thoughts on days past. Write down everything and then craft a message that shows a approachable, human side to their business. It's ok to be vulnerable. Customers WILL response to this. Maybe not right away, but eventually.
2. Have them recall a time of crisis that they personally endured or perhaps something the local community has recently faced. How did they get through it? What were the positives that rose to the top after it was all said and done? Reminding your customers that we have gone through crisis before and came out stronger because of it, will be a message that resonates and encourages. And that's what we need most right now.
3. If your client runs a product based business, it might be more difficult to use either of the approaches. In that case, you might need to convince them that this just isn't the time to promote their product. I'm not advising you stop running their ads, I'm suggesting they use this time to simply say thank you. It could be a thank you to their customers, community and friends for the support they've given throughout the years. Or it could be a thank you to all front-line healthcare workers who are tirelessly fighting this battle on our behalf. Either way, using 30 seconds to simply say thank you during this difficult time will never go unnoticed.

The bottom line is this: Advertising is all about establishing and maintaining a bond with your (potential) customer. That bond is based upon emotion, not information. And during a time of crisis, emotions run very high. This means your client has an opportunity to speak to those emotions and connect with their customer on a deeper level. Encourage your advertisers to use this time wisely and help them show a side of their business that wouldn't normally be seen.

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