



SEROKA
BRAND DEVELOPMENT



8 Best Practices for Marketing in a Socially Distant Environment



HOW TO --- REACH YOUR TARGET MARKET

Refinances are through the roof right now, thanks to the rate drop that resulted from COVID-19's arrival. However, that does not mean your marketing efforts should slow down or stop all together. Having less of a presence or no presence at all in the marketplace can hurt your ability to recruit and build referral relationships. Marketing drives long-term revenue. And as we all know, rates will eventually go up. Putting the brakes on your marketing activities will leave you in a questionable position for achieving long-term success.

Here are 8 best practices you can put into place today that will ensure you will continue to gain market share long after this pandemic is over.

1 | UPDATE YOUR WEBSITE

Did you know that updating your website attracts search engines to crawl it for new information and can even give you a boost in ranking? Your website is the hub of your marketing activities, so it is important to keep it current and relevant. Here are two things you can do to ensure your website is indeed conveying the right information to your target audience:

15 SECOND RULE

Have you heard about the 15 second rule? Believe it or not, it's the average amount of time people spend on a website, so if you haven't grabbed their attention within that span of time, you've likely lost them. That's why it is important to make sure your most important message, the one that distinguishes you from your competitors, is very prominent on your home page. To aid in this, conduct competitive research to better understand how your competitors are positioning themselves on their home pages. If you are positioned similarly and wish to gain a competitive edge, embark on a brand insight assessment to identify your unique strengths and update your positioning to make it more reflective of what sets your mortgage company's brand apart. This can seem like a daunting task for a lender, however if you take a look at some of the most prominent brands, you will see that it's not impossible and begin to understand there are other aspects to positioning. For example, site navigation, how information is presented, calls to action and personality all contribute to a brand's position.

REFRESH YOUR CONTENT

Update loan product, blog and other pages —

Updating pages on your website is one of the best things you can do to improve your page ranking. It shows Google that you are paying attention to your content and care that your audience sees the most up-to-date information. You will be rewarded for executing regular, quality updates that offer visitors new information which addresses their specific needs and challenges.

Add plenty of videos and blog posts on various topics of importance to your audience and be sure to include helpful information about the industry, what you offer and your culture and people. Did you know that 47% of people in the market for a service or product view 3 to 5 pieces of content before engaging with someone at a company? And companies that blog receive 97% more links to their website?¹ Demonstrate your thought leadership or how the mortgage process works by creating a variety of information resources that you can post on your website. If you have difficulty thinking of topics, just ask yourself what questions you are frequently asked by applicants and borrowers and start from there. You will be surprised at how many topics you can come up with just from this exercise.

Focus on your SEO – Competition for Google Ads is down across most industries, so now is the time to turn up your paid SEO activities to drive more traffic to your site.

2

CREATE COMPELLING CONTENT

Right now, while we're still dealing with the effects of the pandemic, many companies are adjusting their messaging, providing helpful information and leading by example while still providing their target audiences with what they need to succeed. As things normalize, further adjustments will be made to messaging that will be reflective of the new reality we will all be living in, including the mortgage application through closing process.

Therefore, opportunities to create timely, compelling content abound. The more content you produce that is helpful and answers borrower/applicant questions, the more people will find and favor you and your brand. This is especially true for content that is relevant to current circumstances.

Begin by developing a list of relevant topics that are creating buzz right now.



USE THOSE FAQs

from borrowers or prospects to start your list



TALK TO LOAN OFFICERS

What are they hearing?



LOOK AT INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

What are they writing about?



CONDUCT AN ONLINE SEARCH FOR TOPICS

such as mortgage, first-time homebuyers, digital mortgage, Coronavirus and mortgage, etc.



USE ONLINE TOOLS

such as Buzzsumo or Moz to see the types of keywords or phrases people are searching for to create relevant content. Moz even formats keywords as questions which gets right to the heart of conducting a meaningful content search. It lets you more easily identify what your target audience wants to know so you can answer their most pressing questions with your content.



USE THE EXPERTS

You have a team of subject matter experts, use them!

Once you have a list of topics, begin creating content to educate your prospects and borrowers.

DEVELOP WEBINARS FOR RECRUITING PURPOSES AND/OR BUILDING REALTOR® RELATIONSHIPS

Consider developing relevant 30-45-minute webinars on some of the topics you have identified. Begin with a hot topic. For example, the combination of the pandemic, low rates, increased origination and refi volumes and the remote work environment created a demand for new loan officers. In addition, lenders are stepping up with marketing dollars and significant signing bonuses to make sure they recruit the best and their businesses continue to thrive after rates go up. So now might be a good time to do a webinar on what makes your mortgage company a great place to work and convey the culture and personality of your business. Alternatively, many Realtors are working with first-time homebuyers and the process has changed greatly during COVID-19. Lessons learned during the pandemic and how you are helping borrowers close faster would be good to share with Realtors.

HERE ARE A FEW ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS:

PANELS WORK!

People like hearing from experts. If you have a few experts, invite them to sit on a panel. Just make sure they are not sharing redundant thoughts.

RECORD YOUR WEBINARS,

edit them as appropriate, then share them afterwards on social media and on your website. And, to create even more content distribution opportunities, break up the webinar into sections by questions or topics so that you can include them within blog posts or use them as promotional videos to drive viewers to a post that delves deeper into a topic covered during a webinar.

MAKE YOUR WEBINAR AS INTERACTIVE AS POSSIBLE.

You or your panel is the draw for people to attend, but once they are present, ever notice how the attendee numbers sometimes slip half-way in? Or how many people are still paying attention vs. just have it running in the background while they work? Engage your audience with polls and other media and make sure you answer those chat box questions in a timely manner.

PROMOTE YOUR WEBINARS THROUGH EMAILS, LINKEDIN AND FACEBOOK.

They are the most effective vehicles to get the word out, encourage attendance, remind participants of when they are taking place, thank attendees for their participation and distribute follow-up materials if there are any.

4



RECORD VIDEOS

VIDEOS ARE ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO COMMUNICATE TO PROSPECTIVE BORROWERS. AND THERE ARE IMPRESSIVE STATISTICS TO BACK THAT CLAIM UP.

VIDEO STATISTICS

- Almost 50% of internet users look for videos related to a product or service before visiting a business establishment
- Video has become the most used format in content marketing, overtaking blogs and infographics. (HubSpot, 2020)
- Promotional videos and brand storytelling are the most common video types created by marketers. (HubSpot, 2020)
- 87% of video marketers say that video has increased traffic to their website. (Wyzowl, 2020)
- 80% of video marketers claim that video has directly increased sales. (Wyzowl, 2020)²

WHEN TO USE VIDEO

If you're thinking this great brand-building tactic won't work for your lending business, think again. There are many situations where retail mortgage lenders can use video. Let's look at two right now.



PRODUCT LAUNCH:

Do you have a new loan product you've been itching to get into the media to garner as much awareness as possible with your audience? Or is it something you would like to share with your existing portfolio of borrowers that would qualify? For example, you could promote financing a home remodeling project or proactively alert qualified candidates of lower rate availability or other products that would be helpful to them while keeping them in your portfolio. A press release, email campaign or a direct mail solicitation are all viable ways to do that. But what if you simultaneously marketed a Q&A that people could tune in to on Facebook, YouTube or Periscope? If you give it some thought and let yourself be creative, you may be surprised by the positive reaction you get. And remember, video viewers are more engaged, so you just may attract a highly interested audience – which means more borrowers.



SEMINARS:

There are many opportunities for recorded seminars that target prospective borrowers and business referrers. A few that come to mind include how to get pre-approved for a mortgage, how to ensure a successful closing, what to look for in a Realtor® and more. For those of you that are ready to try something new, take a polished, recorded seminar you've used in the past, perhaps a first-time homebuyers seminar, and turn it on its head and make it into something more exciting – a live web event that is authentic and interactive. You'll get more views and build your audience. Live seminars are a great way to answer questions in real-time for viewers too. And if you involve a Realtor, you can tap into his/her audience as well. In the next section, live video will be discussed in greater detail.

RECORD VIDEOS

As with webinars, the first step is to develop a list of pertinent topics for potential videos. Here are a few other pointers:

DON'T STRESS

With everyone at home right now, there is no need to stress very much about the quality of your video. Just make sure that the video's content is focused – it will demonstrate you did your homework.

CONSIDER THE LENGTH

Videos that run between 15 seconds and 2 minutes have the highest view rates across multiple social media platforms, but don't make length your primary focus. There are plenty of long-form videos that are over 5 minutes which perform well.

BE INTERESTING

Set an expectation with the title and video thumbprint and then make sure you fulfill it. If your video is slow, monotone or comes off as relatively boring, you'll be one step closer to viewer abandonment. And once you lose viewers, it's hard to get them back. So, practice being interesting and work on your post-production skills to bring it all home.

GOOD AUDIO

Make sure your audio quality is good. Consider using a quality, external microphone.

LIGHTING

Position a light near your camera or consider purchasing a Halo light that surrounds your phone or camera.

DISTRIBUTE

Distribute your videos through various media — over LinkedIn and YouTube or through email blasts and include them on your website.

VIEW ANALYTICS

Review the analytics available to you on the various platforms. For example, audience engagement graphs can let you know where you consistently lose viewership. By studying these points in time, you may be able to conclude what is driving that and experiment with ways to fix it.

5

CONSIDER LIVE VIDEO

Why use live video? It's exciting! It has an element of surprise and intrigue like no other content currently provides. And it can keep your viewer's attention much longer than a blog post, infographic or even a pre-recorded video. In fact, according to Facebook, people watch live video on average 3 times longer than they do a pre-recorded video on the same topic. LinkedIn recently joined Facebook, YouTube and Instagram in allowing live video and it is gaining traction. And even though a live video can be recorded, shared and viewed later, the real magic happens right at the time of the live broadcast.

THIS INCREASE IN ATTENTION-SPAN COMES WITH SIGNIFICANT REWARDS:

- + Live video serves as an effective promotional vehicle for media, social media, emails, etc.
- + It drives immediate social media activity and engagement before, during and after the video event
- + Live video enables the audience to steer a conversation in the direction they wish through a moderator keeping close eye on their comments and questions
- + It allows a brand to be truly authentic and transparent with the real time interactions
- + Live video offers the element of surprise because anything can happen
- + It offers you the opportunity to distribute the video later and break it up into smaller, live snippets
- + It allows your audience to see the real you, the real lender, the real deal. Live video lets you demonstrate your ability to roll with the punches, adapt and improvise
- + It gets your messaging across much more quickly.
Did you know that visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text?

WHICH IS THE BEST PLATFORM?

Right now, live video is still in its infancy. So, no one platform is edging out the competition in a huge way just yet. Some of the top platforms right now include Facebook (the leader), YouTube, Snapchat (the original), Periscope, Twitter, and Instagram. And LinkedIn recently jumped in as well. If you're just dipping your toe into this medium, consider Facebook. It has the greatest reach and is the best for engagement. It's also considered the default platform. Plus, you can easily share your live videos later and embed them in your blog posts. Facebook is considered great for long-form content.

HERE'S HOW TO GET STARTED NOW ON THE FACEBOOK PLATFORM:

1



GO TO YOUR FACEBOOK COMPANY PAGE. THEN CLICK "LIVE VIDEO."

2



ALLOW ACCESS TO YOUR CAMERA AND MICROPHONE

3



YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SEE YOURSELF IN A PREVIEW MODE, WHICH MEANS YOU'RE NOT LIVE YET.

This is a good time to adjust your lighting, make sure your hair looks good, etc. When you're ready, click "Go Live!"

Some of you may be wondering about Instagram. Instagram is an awesome option for short-form content that's under a minute. It's also perfect for quick, flashy updates. YouTube is a solid alternative too, especially if you have an audience there and use the platform consistently for pre-recorded content promotion. It's great for long-form content as well.

FINAL POINTERS

What's most important with live video is having fun with it. Here are some do's and don'ts to keep in mind:

DO

**KEEP IT TO 45
MINUTES OR LESS**

DO

**THROW OUT
THE SCRIPT**

DO

**BE
AUTHENTIC**

DO

**SHOW YOUR ABILITY TO
ADAPT AND IMPROVISE**

DO

**HAVE A SENSE
OF HUMOR**

DO

**USE IT TO DISCOVER
NEW CONTENT IDEAS**

DO

**RECORD AND SHARE IT
ACROSS SOCIAL PLATFORMS**

DON'T | **OVER-PRODUCE**



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GET SOCIAL

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA? BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE YOU'LL FIND CONSUMERS OF ALL AGES.

SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTICS

- Roughly two-thirds of U.S. adults report that they are Facebook users.
- The U.S. is the country with the most Instagram users, reaching 120 million users as of April 2020.
- In 2023, Instagram is projected to reach 120.3 million monthly active users in the U.S., up from 107.2 million users in 2019.³
- 30 million of Twitter's daily users are American (with roughly 59 million total American users). Not only that, 80% of Twitter users are characterized as "affluent millennials."⁴

When it comes to future homebuyers, consider this: According to survey findings by Pew Research Center, 79% of the 18-to-29-year-old demographic use Facebook, and 67% use Instagram. Of 30-to-49-year-olds, 82% use at least one social media platform, Facebook and Instagram being the prevailing favorites. These two generations will represent the majority of homebuyers for the foreseeable future, and how they consume information centers around social media — or, social is at least a part of their daily lives.⁵

Social media is an inexpensive way to promote your company to the target audience segments you serve. For example, if you are trying to recruit LOs on the west coast, with the LinkedIn platform you can target them specifically. You can even upload a prospect list and identify people who are like them. Or if you want to promote your brand and helpful financing or home-buying tips to a specific audience that fits a set of criteria you set, you can do that too.

7

UTILIZE EMAIL BLASTS

Not a new marketing medium and definitely underrated, email is still the #1 way to communicate with applicants and borrowers and is actually stronger than ever before. Why? Because email works:

21%

21% of sent emails are opened within the first hour of delivery

4400%

Email marketing boasts a 4400% ROI (\$44 for every \$1 spent)

3X

Conversion rates are at least three times higher for email than for social media

GIVEN THOSE IMPRESSIVE STATISTICS, LET'S REVIEW SEVERAL EMAIL BEST PRACTICES:

- Take some time to segment your email list before you start to send campaigns to users. The more targeted and personalized, the better
- Don't be too salesy
- Provide useful information, not fluff
- Send emails once or twice per week - more than that borders on annoying
- The best time to send an email is between 10-11 am and Tuesdays have highest open rates
- Emails with 200-250 words have the highest response rates⁶

Want to simplify your email marketing strategy and execution? Put it on automatic. As the name implies, automation is the process of making your email marketing automatic. There are two types of automation programs:

Autoresponders: These are programs that send out sequences of emails automatically after a user takes a specific action.

Workflows: These are more complex automation programs that adjust to the actions of the user to personalize their email series. For example, a prospect viewing a specific web page could be set as a "trigger" to enroll him or her in a specific workflow and send a related email. Workflows use artificial intelligence to segment your email list and improve response rates.

GET REACQUAINTED WITH DIRECT MAIL

Good old-fashioned direct mail is still an effective way to reach potential borrowers, especially for refinance offers. The trick is to personalize your message and wherever possible, customize the offer to the recipient's specific financial situation. The most important component to a successful direct mail campaign is the list you use. If you don't have a qualified list of quality leads, that personalized message won't get into the right hands. So, be sure you work with a reputable vendor who will work closely with you on segmentation and the selection of key attributes to ensure you are targeting the absolute best prospects.

In addition, direct mail is especially effective when used in combination with digital marketing tactics. In fact, 68% of marketing respondents say combining digital and direct mail increased their website visits and 60% say that very combination increased ROI.⁷ So, be sure to duplicate your messaging in emails and on social platforms as you embark on your direct mail campaigns.



HERE'S TO BRIGHTER DAYS AHEAD

There's no need to put your marketing efforts on hold as you manage through-the-roof refi volume in the midst of this health crisis. There are things you can do throughout the next few months (and beyond) to keep in front of your applicants and borrowers – not to mention LO recruits and Realtors. After shoring up your website, begin creating an ample amount of compelling content in different formats such as webinars, videos, infographics, blog posts and other content types. After that, focus on pushing that content out, ideally to targeted audiences in a personalized way, via social media and email. Also be sure to populate your website with your new content to keep it relevant and keep site visitors coming back for more. If you take these steps now, you'll be greatly rewarded throughout the months to come.

If you want more tips or need help creating some of that content, contact us today. We'd be happy to lend a hand. [Click here for more information about Seroka and what we can do for you.](#)

¹ <https://www.impactbnd.com/blog/digital-marketing-stats-to-know-in-2019-infographic>

^{2,3,6} <https://www.hubspot.com/marketing-statistics>

⁴ <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2020/04/14/twitter-statistics>

⁵ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesrealestatecouncil/2020/03/05/social-media-is-the-biggest-factor-in-the-new-real-estate-market/#73aefd3c6f6b>

⁷ <https://snov.io/blog/email-marketing-statistics/>