

5 Ways Printers Can Build Customer Loyalty During Covid-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic changed the business landscape overnight and hurled many organizations into unfamiliar territory. While businesses in many industries—from restaurants to universities, to corporate entities—begin to reopen, it's a great time for printing businesses to step in and build loyalty with both new and existing customers.

I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to talk with Jamie McLennan, Account Executive and Print Strategist at [DMR Graphics](#). You might be familiar with Jamie for the very popular #printerchatpodcast series from [Podcasts from the Printerverse](#). As an essential business in the Philadelphia area, DMR Graphics has remained open throughout the pandemic to help new and existing customers. Here are five ways they are building customer loyalty during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Strategy #1-Be a Creative Strategist for Your Customer

So, what is a Creative Strategist? In short, it's getting your customer to trust you with the full plan and involve you early so you can create a strategy to make everything run smoothly and deliver the desired end result.

"We try to get everyone involved as early as possible. That way, we learn everything they need and if they have a set budget, we can stay within it. If you function as more of an order taker and don't advise your customer, you can quickly find yourself back at the drawing board once your customer sees the quote."

Of course, service is key. If there's anything that's been reinforced for Jamie during this experience, it's the importance of being adaptable, "As an essential business that plays an important part in many of our customers' supply chain, we've remained open throughout the pandemic. In the beginning, there were many zoom and conference calls, and the process slowed down due to many customers working from home. Once everything started opening up, we became very busy quoting. I've actually had a few face-to-face meetings, where we all wore masks, and I dropped off proofs in the parking lots."

Constant communication is also a must. "I've basically been trying to keep in touch with everything and everybody." In addition to phone calls and emails, DMR has enhanced communications with customers with helpful tips as part of their content marketing. They started sending out "Ready, Set, Go" emails detailing the things businesses may need to consider before opening up, such as office or store traffic patterns. They also provided a checklist of what might be needed to enforce this initiative, such as interior and exterior signage. The effort has certainly been appreciated. "A lot of people have told us they've found these checklists very helpful."

Strategy #2 - Invest in Online Tools

Many printers focus more on adding printing equipment than new software, but the online portal DMR uses to communicate with customers has brought additional value during the pandemic. Once businesses began to reopen, DMR Graphics was able to respond quickly and [build landing pages](#) featuring many of the items businesses need to reopen safely - such as floor decals, directional signage, menus, and window clings. When asked how they were able to respond so quickly, Jamie was quick to credit the online tools they invested in pre-pandemic. "Every customer we have already gets their online portal through our workflow. We use it every day to communicate with customers and update them on the status of their projects, so it's highly customizable. We just created a landing page within the tool and made it public for us. Because the tool is easy to update and customize, we're able to easily add items almost every day."

Strategy #3 - Help your Customers by Being a One-Stop-Shop

Let's face it, people like to work with other businesses that make their lives easier. When it comes to reopening a business during a pandemic, any help is appreciated. Businesses and offices in the reopening phase are in unfamiliar territory—they may not realize all that they need to reopen safely.

"It seems like our industry is focusing on the restaurants, but many other types of businesses, including prep schools and universities, are planning for their reopening in the Fall. Their first question is 'what do you have to show us?' The landing pages are a great starting point for us to work with the creative directors and marketing managers at these organizations and provide a customized solution that meets their needs. Then they go into their meetings saying 'DMR/Allegra already have this ready to go.'"

DMR Graphics also takes pressure off the customers by offering flexibility. "We offer generic items that are already printed and ready to ship for businesses that need these items quickly. For businesses that need the items customized with their logo and brand colors, we've built a workflow process to make it an easy adjustment." And a lot of times, the customers that order the generic items come back and order customized items once they're able to open additional locations.

Strategy #4 - Take Social Media Seriously

If you're still not taking social media seriously, take note—this is where you can generate a lot of awareness for your business and find your next print customer. I actually learned about all that DMR Graphics was offering for customers from a post on LinkedIn Jamie created and used him as a positive example in my recent Print Media Center presentation, "[Crafting a Business Narrative](#)."

"Social media is very important to the next generation of print customers because that's where they look for everything. Today's print customer isn't always easy to reach, but they are watching and paying attention." But, McClennan cautions, engagement is key. "I always tell other printers 'don't just broadcast everything, reply to people and offer suggestions.'"

Strategy #5 - Give Back to the Community

Customers - especially the next generation - love businesses that give back. In order to build customer loyalty, today's customer wants to know what your company values and stands for in addition to the services you provide. DMR Graphics was proud to create and launch [#BeWelladelphia](#) items-featuring bumper stickers, t-shirts and other items.

The graphics were created by their in-house designer, and all the proceeds of all items sold go to support [Philabundance](#)-a hunger-relief organization in the Philadelphia area. "Philabundance is a wonderful organization in the community that's one of the larger donation places for food. We heard they were getting hit pretty hard [due to the pandemic], so we wanted to do all we could to help." The initiative is just getting started, and DMR is excited to push the effort and generate awareness.

One of my favorite quotes from Dr. Maya Angelou is, "At the end of the day, people won't remember what you said or what you did, but they will remember how you made them feel." These are also words to live by for businesses striving to build customer loyalty. When reflecting on challenging times, your customer may not remember exactly what you told them or details of the deliverable, but they will remember if you eased stress, helped others and were imperative in getting their business up and running again. And when you have customers that think of you in those terms, you can't help but to be better positioned for the future.

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