

Miami Herald

BUSINESS MONDAY

MY VIEW | MARKETING

With trade shows & conferences halted, it's time to turn to Plan B



BY BARBARA GOLDBERG
Special to the Miami Herald

Fear and uncertainties surrounding the spreading epidemic of coronavirus are impacting trade shows and the conference circuit across the country. Sudden cancel-

lations are coming in historic rates, negatively impacting business revenue plans for the year. An array of South Florida-based businesses who had plans to attend a major trade show or conference this year will feel the impact of lost revenue, missed opportunities and reduced face-to-face communication with key prospects. Not to mention the number of South Florida hotels, restaurants and attractions that will feel the economic pain.

Sounds pretty bleak.

However, now can be an opportune time for those business leaders who spend money to stage, sponsor, exhibit or attend meetings and conventions to reallocate these earmarked funds — and invest in creative marketing and communication initiatives to help build the lead funnel.

It's time to wash our hands of Plan A... and pivot quickly to implement Plan B. Here are some suggested tips on how to parlay this unprecedented challenge into alternative marketing

initiatives:

Contact the show host ASAP to determine promotional opportunities with those who have registered for the event. They likely have co-marketing opportunities within their own digital channels. If they won't offer you the email lists of attendees, ask to purchase the mailing list ...it's worth the investment.

Activate your sales teams to reach out to the top 10 prospects or buyers who have scheduled meetings in advance with you to

offer a virtual coffee meeting. Send them a Starbucks gift card in advance with the directive to bring their cup of Joe to the virtual meeting and the link to your video conference call-in. (Chances are their schedule is still free during those trade show days.)

Develop a virtual brochure to email your contacts. They can be interactive and creative — hire a designer or challenge your savvy intern to use the online apps. Or, send a video brochure via FedEx.

Have any extra hand sanitizer around? Send it with the FedEx and your audience will be delighted to receive your package.

Now's a great time to organize a webinar to share the key messages you were planning to convey at the trade show. (Again — challenge your marketing team to execute.)

Embrace the digital space. Shift or increase your budget online to promote product launches or

SEE GOLDBERG, 12G

12G

Agenda

BUSINESS MONDAY

MONDAY MARCH 23 2020
MIAMIHERALD.COM

FROM PAGE 6G

GOLDBERG

that were planned as part of the event. Paid social enables you to directly target your audience — including buyers who were on your list.

Consider alternative travel for face-to-face visits with key prospects. Carve out a road trip for those within drive-able markets. Or, consider a private jet (or jet-sharing) for those VIP sales calls.

Encourage your PR team to **expand media engagement strategies**. Shift that PR budget to support a creative launch that garners third-party endorsement.

For example, South Florida-based Integrated Dermatology, the largest independent dermatology group in the country, has a major presence at the American Association of Dermatology (AAD) an-

nual meeting each year. This year, the company already designed a large booth, sponsored the career networking fair and scheduled numerous meetings with doctors looking to sell their practice and others searching for career opportunities. With the annual meeting canceled, the company immediately shifted its focus to other avenues that would reach these same dermatologists — print ads in key trade publications, digital marketing campaigns and direct outreach to schedule

virtual meetings.

It's too early to tell when the coronavirus will subside, and the impacts on the economy will continue to unfold. However, whether businesses are working remotely or in-office, it's time to embrace technology, be creative and reallocate your funds to alternative marketing measures.

Barbara Goldberg is CEO, O'Connell & Goldberg Public Relations in Hollywood.
bgoldberg@oandgpr.com

