



Pandemic 2020 and
Beyond

Five Ways We Must Change Our Sales Approach



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Five Ways We Must Change Our Sales Approach

by Al Getler – ANC – VP Sales and Business Development

During the 2008 downturn, my newspaper team took on a single word that remains today in that operation. The word is nimble.

This e-book will challenge you to be nimbler by:

- Defining what it is to be nimble
- Reviewing businesses' reactions to the 2020 Pandemic
- Identifying Five Ways We Must Change Our Sales Approach
- Challenge you to stop doing some things and start doing others

Go to the Merriam-Webster definition and you see nimble defined as “marked by quick, alert, clever conception, comprehension, or resourcefulness.”

What is more telling is to look at the **synonyms & antonyms for nimble**.

NIMBLE

Synonyms

alert, brainy, bright, brilliant, clever, exceptional, fast, hyperintelligent, intelligent, keen, quick, quick-witted, sharp, sharp-witted, smart, super smart, ultra smart

Antonyms

airheaded, birdbrained, boneheaded, brain-dead, brainless, bubbleheaded, chuckleheaded, dense, dim, dim-witted, doltish, dopey (also dopy), dorky [slang], dull, dumb, dunderheaded, empty-headed, fatuous, gormless [chiefly British], half-witted, knuckleheaded, lamebrain (or lamebrained), lunkheaded, mindless, obtuse, opaque, pinheaded, senseless, simple, slow, slow-witted, soft, softheaded, stupid, thick, thickheaded, thick-witted, unbrilliant, unintelligent, unsmart, vacuous, weak-minded, witless

How do you want to be known in your marketplace? As CLEVER, QUICKWITTED, and SHARP? Or would you rather not address present conditions and be the BRAIN-DEAD, DIM-WITTED, DUNDER-HEADED media sales executive.

You have permission to skip this section if you wish. It is only going to state what you already know. Go ahead and read it to frame your situation.

The Pandemic

The events of 2020 are nothing any of us could have predicted. The idea that we would have to stay at home, not go to work, and adjust our lives so completely was not anticipated. The term pandemic was not a part of most people's daily lexicon.

At first, some of us thought, "Well, I have been through 9/11." Others said to themselves. "Our business made it through the 2008 Great Recession, so we will get through this." And then we all realized was something quite different.

A portion of the world went to work at home. Video conference technologies like Zoom were quickly put into play. Those that could get back to work did in a different world. Needing a few items at the grocery store became more complicated and frustrating. Meeting a colleague for coffee or stopping in for a quick business discussion was darkened by closures.

Something else began to happen that could not be imagined in the business environment. Ideas were being put into place seemingly overnight. Initiatives were decided on without committees in medium and large businesses. Small business began adopting practices and procedures and implementing technology and digital aids at a breakneck speed. They were quickly learning to be **NIMBLE**.

A dozen nimble bagels

Bagels are an essential part of life. At least my family's life. We live in a small island town. There is only one place to get bagels. Like small businesses everywhere, Wally's Place – Bagels & Deli was shut down. Not only were we cut off from bagels, my teenaged daughter was out of a part time job. The owners had to pivot.

Wally's is the kind of place you usually stopped into, stood on the order line, ordered a breakfast sandwich and a coffee and were on your way. It is also a meeting place where peak hours you might not get a table to sit and talk with friends. The pandemic took all of that away.

A takeout window was improvised. Social distancing immediately went into place. And a major pivot took place on the Wally's website. An order form app was put into place. The hours of software implementation by the owners was not obvious to the customer. The customer only knew they could now order a dozen bagels and be back in bagel heaven.

Oh, they have it. They're nimble

A half a mile from our house is a place where if they do not have it, you must really evaluate if you need it.

Keeler Bay Variety (KVB) is a grocery store you would assume is typical convenience store. As you get to know the store, its owners, and the staff, you soon realize their mission is to say, "Yes, we have that." And they usually do.

One winter night, I need a pair of swimming goggles for a high school skit for my daughter. Wendy, one of the family owners, disappeared for about 5 minutes. She came back with a packaged set of goggles and a pair that has already been worn. I could borrow a pair from her kids or buy a pair. I gladly paid for a pair.

When a business like KVB is faced with a pandemic they adapt quickly. Things went from business as usual to one family member per customer in the store at a time to curbside pick-up in days. Like Wally's, a system was put in place on their website. It took trial and error to find a way to offer the products available, but the fantastic staff made it work with a few clarifying phone calls. Walk ups were not encouraged, but not turned away.

The store is now reopened as masks are required to enter the store. The friendly staff is back in place behind hanging plexiglass. Things are different and the same.

The big question remains: Has business changed forever or just until a vaccine is found for COVID-19?

Time for newspapers to be Nimble. Again

Newspapers must be nimble to adjust to the events of 2020. Like the businesses mentioned in the grey box above, newspapers have no choice but to change.

The best newspaper folks have not stopped being nimble. One could argue that there are more tools at the disposal of newspaper staff to be nimble than ever before. And yes, that staff is smaller. So, we got that out of the way. Moving on.

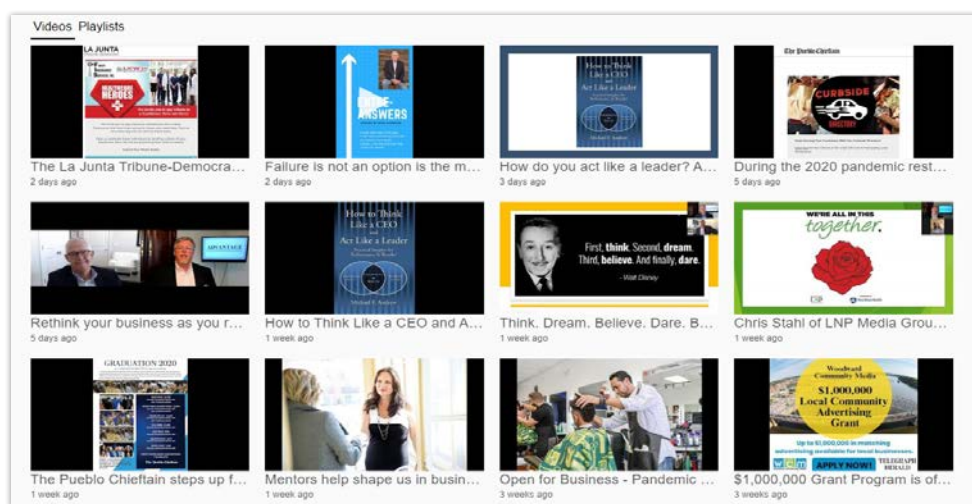
We must be ready to address what our customers' needs are and will be. We have become their marketing advisor to help them to get back on their feet. Our clients need to move towards the new normal rapidly. You are a huge part of that equation. You are transitioning into a business partner.

“We have no choice but to change...”

Five ways we must change our sales approach

A part of being nimble is changing immediately to what the market needs.

At ANC, we immediately began interviewing experts on video from the newspaper industry and outside the industry to find out what had to change. From the publishers and revenue executives to a coffee shop owner and Disney executives, we look for answers.



[Click here to see our video interviews](#)

Simply selling stuff for advertisers to buy is no longer the answer. We must provide our clients what they need as they dig their way out and move towards the new normal.

THE FIVE WAYS WE MUST CHANGE OUR SALES APPROACH

1. Our Customer Approach Will Change

These things will change:

- a. Partnerships – we will transition from salesperson to advisor.
- b. We will analyze what they need and present it. Give the needs analysis a rest.
- c. We will set appointments and not cold call or stop in.

2. We Will Sell Audience

It is not just print, and it is not just digital. It is not just special sections and it is not just digital promotions. It is who you reach. Sell the audience.

3. We Will Package

Simplification is what the customer needs and wants. And it isn't selling the deal or section of the day. It is selling what they need and packaging content and audience in print and digital. And the contracts will be shorter.

4. We Will Become a Center for Ideas

No one is in the marketplace and seeing the variety of the people and ideas that we see. Share the ideas we see. Hold a virtual idea sharing event. Plan a webinar. Invite an expert. Teach ecommerce practices. Create a virtual community. Provide reassurance through communication.

5. We Will be Technology-based Sales Professionals

Zoom, Google Meet, or whatever the technology the client prefers, we will be an expert host. We will learn the tricks of our email program to communicate more and faster (example: Gmail templates).

Bonus – Here are a few more ideas from industry colleagues.

Scott Champion – CEO – Champion Media

- We must do a better job of using email blasts to reach customers that we may not be calling on regularly to let them know what we have to offer.
- Sell marketing packaging instead of selling individual ads or programs. Everything is now about marketing and not selling. Our salespeople have to understand the difference.

David Stringer - David R. Stringer - Publisher - The Lawton Constitution

- Sell the solution, not the product. Do not pitch anything unless you can explain specifically how it benefits the client.
- Deepen client knowledge. What are their goals? How are they standing to PY? What parts of the business are working/not working?

Jason Gwinnop - Retail Advertising Manager – Medina-Gazette

- Don't be afraid to contact them for fear of appearing opportunistic – Many welcome the contact, especially if your product fits their business
- Don't hard sell – especially now. It is OK to call and see how they are doing without pitching a product or asking for a sale. Maintain relations.

Kelly Freudensprung – Publisher - The Saline Courier

- Be creative and encourage newspaper managers to have some added-value to all sales. This is a small way to say, “We're glad you are open.”
- There may be an opportunity for different type businesses in the TV products: Cleaning services, Delivery services, shopping services, online services.

Parks Rogers – Group Publisher – OPC News, LLC

- On in-person calls, we should come fully masked, gloved and with hand sanitizer and wipes. We should never be the party in an interaction that makes customers uncomfortable. If our preparedness seems like overkill then we can back down (remove masks, etc.) but only at the lead of the customer
- Increase the use of email and texts for primary communication methods

Jennifer Marshall - Director of Operations & Advertising - The Ledger Independent

- We must be sensitive to our customers' needs. They are struggling like the rest of us so we need to determine how we can best help them attempt to regain a sense of normalcy.
- Create sales campaigns that will benefit the customer. Whether it is buy 1 get 1 free with a commitment or you add on a product at no charge just to help the customer.

Darin Carragata – Marketing Executive – Yuma Sun

- DON'T BOMBARD THEM WITH OPTIONS- Design a few highly appealing menu choices for our customers to choose from. They need to be appealing to potential customers to get them started and include options for current customers to grow into as their results increase.
- FOR CALLS THAT CANNOT BE ONE CALL CLOSES- Due to our advertisers being unable to give us their full attention during the pandemic...Help them focus by leaving behind a SIMPLE MENU of packages that they can digest before the next

Bonus – Here are a few more ideas from industry colleagues.

Kellie Nicholson - General Manager - Rocket Miner

- Some business owners are lost, so we need to offer advice to help them innovate, as in selling online, delivering products, building a pick-up window, etc.
- Business owners are very stressed right now, so we need to give them reassurance that they are not alone and that we have solutions to their new challenges by offering seminars and literature with helpful information for their business.

Jamie Keith - Sales & Marketing Director - Appeal-Democrat / TCN Newspapers

- More self-promotion of how the newspaper gives to the community. Better PR and branding for what we offer service groups, community events, etc. “Proud to support campaign.”
- Email/call vs. dropping by unannounced (which no one likes). Set an organized structure to your emails and make them consistent and brief so clients want to get back to you. Ask if you can text a client.

How will you change?

Okay, so that is the way selling will change, but how will you change? This next section takes you through a few exercises designed to have you stop doing some things to make room to start doing other things.

Remember, the goal is to become NIMBLE! Nimble as in alert, brainy, bright, brilliant, clever, exceptional, fast, hyperintelligent, intelligent, keen, quick, quick-witted, sharp, sharp-witted, smart, super smart, ultra-smart.

Stop doing that

First, you have to stop doing some things to begin doing other things that will make you nimble.

Here are a few things you might stop doing TODAY:

- Stop getting a slow start to the day and dig in
- Stop complaining about the ad placement system
- Stop whining
- Stop using paperwork as an excuse to not sell
- Stop stopping in - make appointments

Let's begin with FIVE THINGS YOU CAN STOP DOING TODAY

FIVE THINGS I CAN STOP DOING TODAY:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Start doing this

Now let's move to what FIVE THINGS YOU CAN START DOING TODAY to work toward being NIMBLE.

Here are a few things to consider:

- Learn how to use one feature of my email program to better serve my customers
- Learn how to host a Zoom or some other video conferencing meeting tool
- Learn something new - Read an article to help me be more productive like [5 Steps to a Clutter-Free Workspace](#)
- Begin a weekly idea sharing email for your clients
- Take a good idea from one business each day and apply it to another (An HVAC dealer to a bakery)
- Implement your phone's calendar to plan every minute of your day

So now, what are **FIVE THINGS YOU CAN START DOING TODAY?**

FIVE THINGS I CAN START DOING TODAY:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Plan your time and what must get done today and every day. [My friend Michael Hyatt says, "What gets scheduled gets done."](#)

Go through the list of the things that are changing and reconstruct your calendar and the list of things you will start doing and include them today.

About Us

Focus. Revenue. *Solutions.*

At Advantage Newspaper Consultants, we know that you want to attain your revenue goals. To do that, you need your team to close annual contracted business. The problem is lean resources and staff turnover, which makes you feel overwhelmed and defeated. We believe contracted revenue can be obtained.

We understand how difficult it is to meet your objectives, which is why we provide focused revenue solutions.

Here's how we do it:

1. We work with you to develop a revenue generating product.
2. We set a goal and prepare your team.
3. We provide focus and close business with your team

So, call or email to focus on a revenue solution today. And in the meantime, watch our videos at <https://newspaperconsultants.com/videos/>

