# A GUIDE TO
# DIGITAL & SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS
## DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MAIN STREET
# WADSWORTH
#ADowntownUnmatched

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An Accredited National Main Street Program
An Accredited Ohio Main Street Program

# Acknowledgements

The Main Street Wadsworth organization extends its sincerest thanks to Dr. Alexa Fox, Assistant Professor of Marketing at The University of Akron, and Dr. Joseph Fox, Associate Professor of Practice-Entrepreneurship at The University of Akron, for sharing the strategies contained in this guide to help our downtown Wadsworth businesses and organizations use digital and social media marketing tools to promote their businesses and organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## A Note from Authors Dr. Fox & Dr. Fox

This packet contains "food for thought" approaches to marketing since Main Street Wadsworth is comprised of a variety of types of businesses. Some approaches may be better suited for certain types of industries and customers. We are Wadsworth residents and are both professors in the College of Business Administration at The University of Akron. We are happy to share some expertise to aid local businesses and organizations in Wadsworth during this challenging time. Please feel free to contact us using the information below:

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# The Power of Digital & Social Media Marketing

## QUICK TIPS

Digital and social tools really shine in building relationships with consumers, especially because people may have more time to do so now. Focusing on human connection, albeit virtual, is critical right now.

Recognizing that not all small businesses are set up for or concentrating on e-commerce, there are still ways to use technology to connect with customers in meaningful ways.

Consider ditching long social media posts/emails. People want straight, to-the-point information. Precisely and clearly state what you are offering during the shut-down period.

If you are using social calendars and/or content management tools, check your scheduled content to determine if planned posts still apply and feel relevant to the audience, given current events.

Partner with other downtown Wadsworth businesses and organizations to network and promote goods and services and show continued support for the Main Street Wadsworth district.
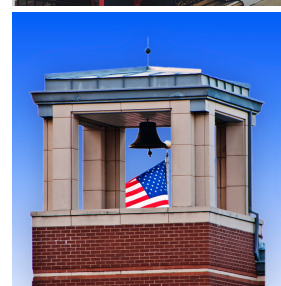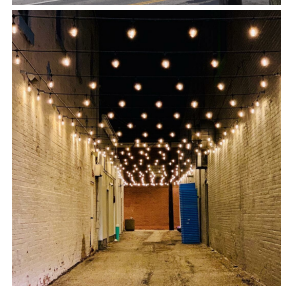
# Facebook

**In addition to regular Facebook posts:**

- **Use Facebook Live to continue to engage with customers in real time.**

- **A few ideas:**

  - **Create real-time in-store walk-through demos to showcase new products (this could be especially lucrative if no e-commercestore exists).**

  - **Getting together to dine and shop with friends may be out of the question at the moment, but restaurants and/or retail can host sessions on set days/times to chat about food (e.g., Valley Café), beer (e.g., Wadsworth Brewing Company), fashion (e.g., Opal Dragonfly) – use whatever your expertise is and encourage consumers to virtually "bring a friend" to chat.**

  - **Set one-on-one consultations with customers who want to see what's new, ask questions, etc. You can even take pre-orders that can be picked up when everything opens again.**

# YouTube

**If you've never used YouTube before, now is the time! For any videos that you want to host but don't necessarily need to run them on a social platform in real time, this would be where to do it. Again, "short" is the name of the game (< 1 minute).**

# Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Get in on digital activity that is relevant to what is going on to show your support. For example:

#InThisTogetherOhio: Governor DeWine's team made a compilation video of well-known Ohioans encouraging people to take their directives seriously. Using this hashtag (in a post with your own video or any other type of content) encourages people to feel connected to a common cause as well as one another and may be viewed as more relatable than federal/global initiatives given its state-level focus.

#GreatAmericanTakeout: This campaign ran on social media on March 24. People were encouraged to get takeout and post photos/information about the restaurants they patronized. Joining trends like this one helps people remember and feel connected to you during a challenging time.

# Social Listening

Businesses can increase their entrepreneurial alertness by using social media to look for latent and obvious opportunities. For instance, Scalerator NEO, a local non-profit focused on growth of SMBs, recently posted a direct call for help on Twitter to assist one of their member companies in sourcing items to pivot into creating face shields: https://twitter.com/ScaleratorNEO/status/1242079159075168256?s=20

Listening to customers and professionals in high-stress areas can direct resources to help meet new needs arising.

# "What-If" Questions

Think about additional revenue streams and innovations by using "what-if" questions. There is a nice write-up of this technique here: https://www.fastcompany.com/3046179/the-four-parts-of-the-what-if-innovation-process

The goal is to help innovate and create new opportunities in your domain. It can also help identify hurdles and see what resources enable the move towards new innovations, even if this is a process innovation taking your business model online. "What if I started to try selling my products using video calls?" Answering this question and thinking in this framework may help you see what you need to do to make this happen and even perform low-fidelity tests.

# No-Code Solutions

No-code solutions are growing at a rapid pace. These platforms allow non-developers the ability to quickly create workable software applications and get them out to customers. A few of these include:

- Glide Apps (https://www.glideapps.com/) – Make an app with a Google Sheet

- Bubble.io (https://bubble.io/) – Build web applications in an easy-to-use interface

- Carrd (https://carrd.co/) – Simple, good-looking websites

There are a lot of examples on websites like MakerPad (www.makerpad.co) and many of the solutions listed above include templates. Here is a YouTube video of an example on creating a gift card system for a company without code:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SggEg2nCkTw

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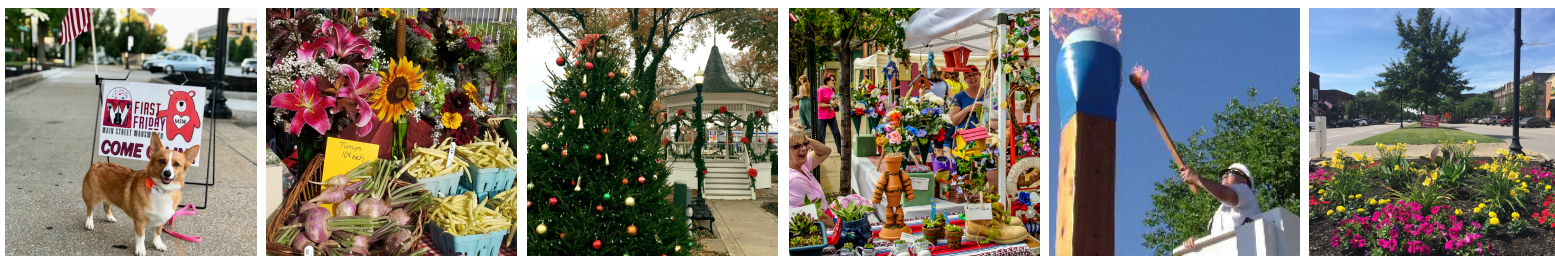
# Check Local, State, Federal, and Other Information

The uncertainty of this crisis has also created a steady stream of different programs and opportunities available to businesses from local, state, and federal levels:

**Wadsworth:**
https://www.wadsworthcity.com/893/COVID-19-Pandemic-Updates

**Greater Akron Area:**
https://gaccovid19.org/

**Ohio:**
https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home/Resources-for-Economic-Support/

**Small Business Administration (SBA):**
https://www.sba.gov/page/coronavirus-covid-19-small-business-guidance-loan-resources

**Help Main Street:**
https://www.helpmainstreet.com

**I Love Main Street Wadsworth**