



6 Small Business **Lessons**

to take into 2021



COVID-19 has changed pretty much **everything** about how we do business.

We've spent the year working with small businesses to help them adapt to all of the curveballs of 2020 and to make the smartest use of digital marketing tools.

6 lessons for small businesses in 2021

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try something new

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and top of mind

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Lesson 1

Don't be afraid to try something new

2020 has challenged us like never before—and pushed us to think differently.

So, while you're getting used to how things have changed, be aware that they're still changing, and don't settle into a "new" routine. Instead, keep exploring different ideas, trying new things, and innovating creative ways that you can do business. Your customers are a great source of inspiration.



What are your customers looking for?

Online ordering?
Virtual classes? Use their input to influence what you try next.

Real-world example



Afro Flow Yoga gets flexible with their business model.

Prior to 2020, the founders of Afro Flow Yoga, Leslie Salmon Jones and Jeff W. Jones, had spent 10 years offering their services and sharing their practice around the world via live classes.



Instead of shutting down, they launched virtual classes to bring people from all over the world together—online.



By communicating with their students and teachers via email, they were able to offer their new virtual classes to everyone they had engaged with over the tenure of their business, without missing a beat.

Checklist

New things you can try



- Conduct a survey.**
Send your customers an email survey asking what you're doing well and what they'd like to see you add or change.
- Try new tools.**
If you've never used it before, and you think it might fit with your business, try it out.
- Pivot.**
Consider how to adapt and respond to shifting customer needs and new demands.

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Lesson 2

Stay in touch and top of mind



One thing 2020 has taught us? Communicate clearly, early, and often.

COVID-19 changed so many things about the way small businesses operate—and communicate. Now, keeping in contact with customers is critical in a socially-distanced world.

As you plan for 2021, you'll want to keep customers informed of additional changes, how you're meeting their needs, and how you're making them feel safe.

Of course, you'll also want to keep them engaged and interested in your products or services.



Real-world example

Sienna Farms grows a whole new business opportunity.

Sienna Farms has always grown delicious vegetables and served local restaurants and communities with their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) option with fresh farm-to-table produce.

In 2020, they noticed a new strong demand from their local community for their CSA farm share.

At the start of the pandemic, they sent one email—and their farm share subscription skyrocketed. The owner, Chris, said “it was the spark that lit the fire that turned their farm business around.”



Checklist



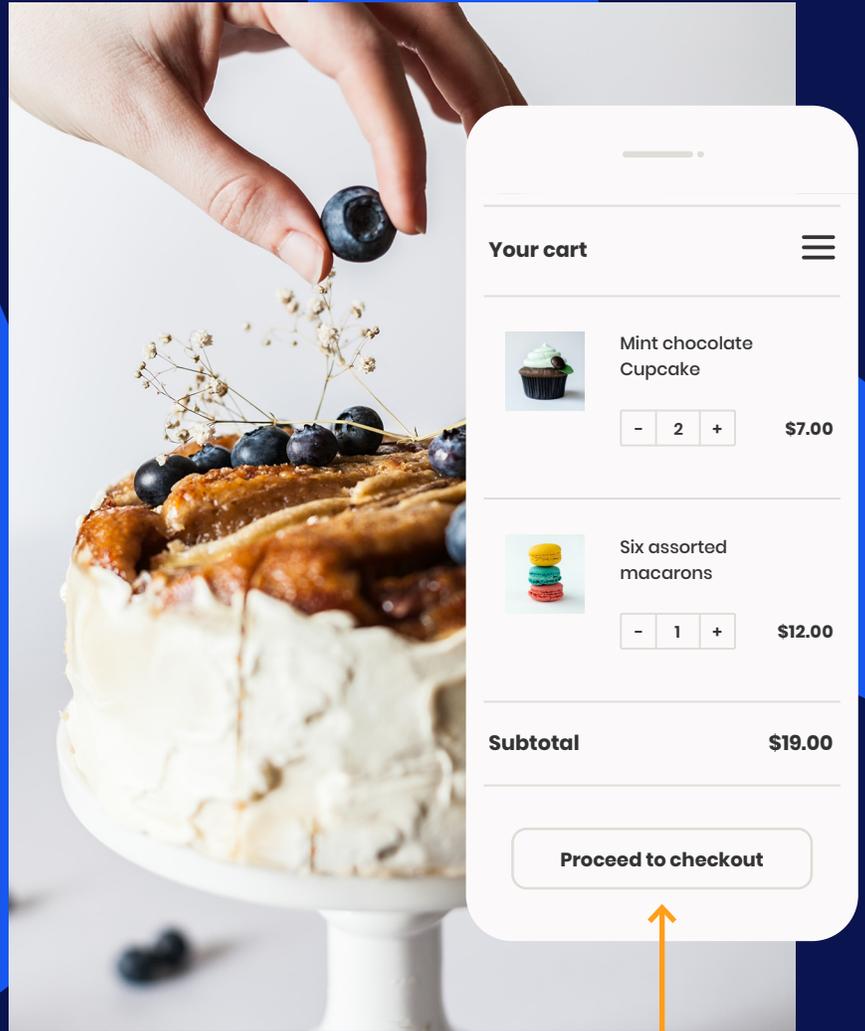
How to improve customer communication

- Update your website.
- Email contacts about changes—regularly.
- Post updates on all social media channels.

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Lesson 3

Do more business online



Sell around the clock with the power of email and online stores.

Having an online presence has always been important, but now it's absolutely critical.

And it starts with having a mobile-responsive website. This is a place you own and can direct people to using email marketing and social media. Here, they can learn more about who you are and what problem you're solving for them—and you can drive more business.

Real-world example



Delivering on their customers' online ordering request.

At the beginning of the pandemic, [Treat Cupcake Bar](#) had customers reaching out through social media around the clock.

One of the main requests? Adding online ordering to their website, making it easier for customers to place orders during the shutdown.



Working with our Marketing Advisor team, Treat rebuilt their website and used social media integration to link the Treat social accounts with their Constant Contact account, making it easy to manage their marketing all in one place, connect with customers, and sell more with online ordering.

Checklist

How you can sell more online

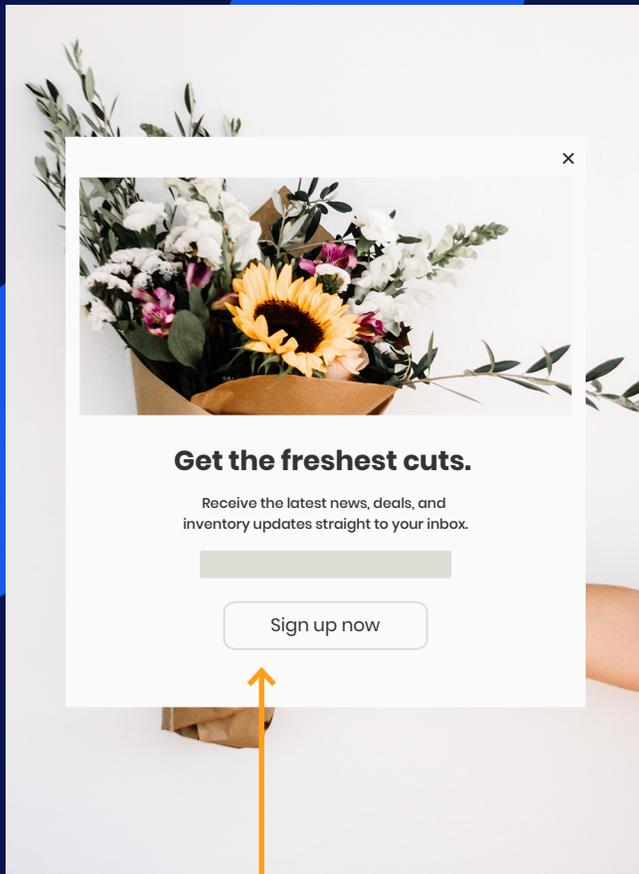


- Build a website (if you don't already have one).**
Constant Contact's [Website Builder](#) will get you online in no time.
- Sell products and services you offer online.**
Set up an [online store](#) or [Shoppable Landing Page](#).
- Use [email marketing](#) and [social media marketing tools](#).**
Drive business to your website or online store.

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Lesson 4

Collect and take action on customer data



Don't just collect information—act on it.

You've got a lot of information about your customers. Now is the time to use it. Using data like contact information, interests, demographics, and past behaviors helps you dig deeper and connect with the right people at the right time.

As a rule, always collect email addresses.

Constant Contact offers a suite of list-growth tools that allow you to build a permission-based list of contacts that want to hear what you have to say.



Real-world example

Soluna Garden Farm's peony share is in full bloom.

When Soluna Garden Farm had to temporarily pause in-person operations, owners Amy and Tatiana knew just what to do: stay connected through the email list they had developed over the past 10 years. They created a new community-supported agriculture (CSA) peony share subscription that they announced via email—and sold out in one day.

“Every time we send an email we notice a bump in sales. If we didn't have our mailing list, we would not have a way to easily reach all the customers when the pandemic hit,” says Amy.



Checklist

Ways to get more from customer data

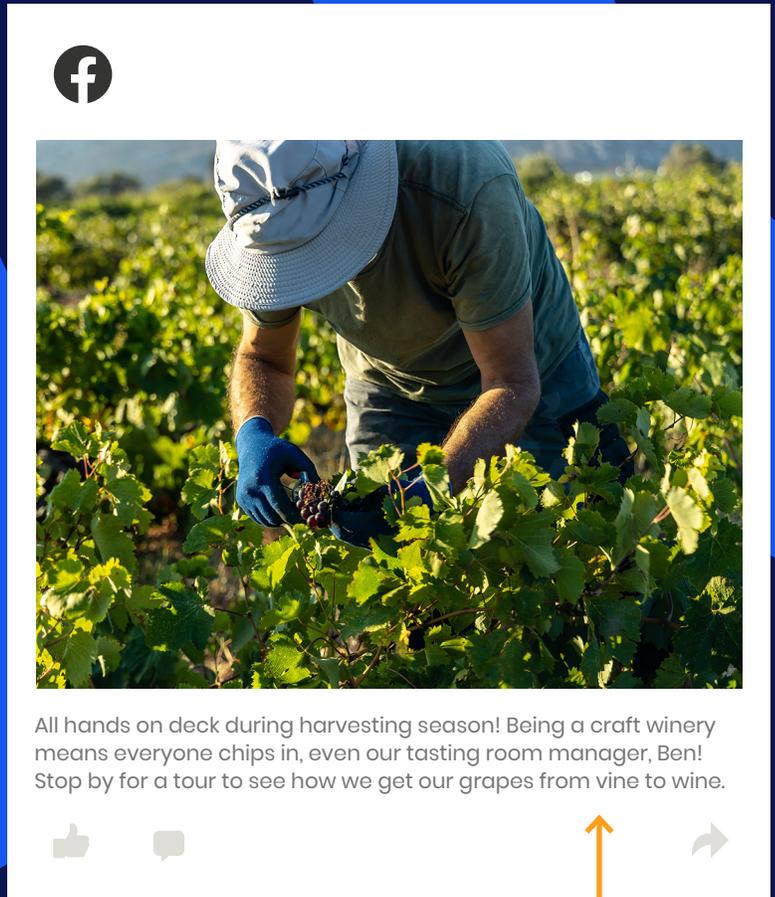


- Collect emails at every touchpoint.**
Add a sign-up form to your website or online store, and your social ads.
- Dig into your reporting.**
Take time to read your data reports to find new opportunities to connect.
- Use advanced techniques.**
Customer segmentation and behavioral analysis can help you send the right message to the right people.

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Lesson 5

Build your brand with storytelling



Take advantage of what makes you awesome—by sharing it with the world.

Don't be afraid to get personal. Pull back the curtain and share the real people behind your business.

You can capitalize on consumers' existing desire to shop small by leaning into your identity as a small business in your branding. When we talk about "brand," we simply mean your reputation—the impression that your business gives others through online communication, as well as in-person interactions. Your brand story goes a little further and speaks to your identity as a small business.

Real-world example



The Concord Cheese Shop sharpens their marketing game.

The Concord Cheese Shop has always had a strong brand reputation in their town of Concord, Massachusetts, based on their unmatched in-person customer experience.

When COVID-19 shifted their business, the shop's cheesemonger and marketing guru Steve Dahlgren made it a priority to fully bring their brand to life online.

Steve was already using a website, email marketing, and social media to connect with customers, but the personality of each platform felt disjointed.



Steve made it his mission to refine the shop's brand and make sure it told a consistent story on all of their marketing channels.

The result? Powering through, and thriving, during an extremely challenging year.

Checklist



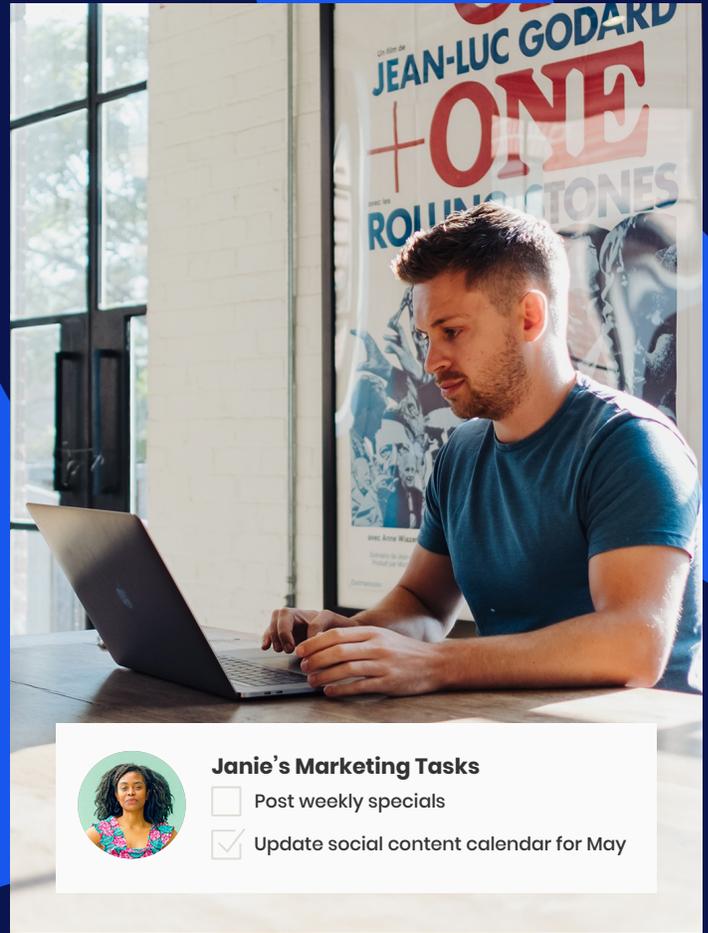
Key steps to building your brand

- Define and document your brand identity.
- Update your website or create a new logo, then incorporate it into all of your digital marketing.
- Bring your branding to life in your customer experience, too.

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Lesson 6

Prepare for uncertainty



Janie's Marketing Tasks

- Post weekly specials
- Update social content calendar for May

Take action now to prepare your business for anything that might come your way.

Now is the time to assess, reorganize, re-prioritize and re-imagine critical business infrastructure, crisis plans, and resources to ensure you're set up for success or can quickly pivot.

Checklist

Ways to get prepared



- Assess the efficiency of your operations and tools.**
Take stock of your resources, and what you may need in different scenarios.
- Check your readiness with one of our small business action plans.**

We've learned a lot from our customers as they navigated this year's challenges.

And the best lesson we've learned in 2020?

How resilient and resourceful small businesses are—and will continue to be.

Get all the tools and advice to keep your business powering forward at constantcontact.com.



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