



# To Market in Hard Times, Prepare Ahead

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Life ebbs and flows. There will be up moments and times when your head is in your hands. How can marketing help your business sail through the low tides of life? Doing preparation work ahead of time and having a “toolkit” on hand is helpful because it can keep the panic at bay. What should be included in the Marketing in Hard Times Toolkit?

## The Toolkit

Being prepared can help a business get a “leg up” during hard times—especially if we do not see the hard times coming. Here are a few ideas to get started:

- 1. Identify services that are, both, a “must” and affordable for clients.** Think about the a-little-can-go-a-long-way concept here. What services should a pet owner do that are low cost, but would prevent bigger health and financial problems down the road? Think about catchy concepts like “health for under \$100 dollars.” People will want to know the exact amount they will spend before they walk through the door. Also, during hard times, train the staff that upsetting or
- 2. Know the best way to reach your current and future clients.** What is the best way to reach your current clients quickly? Does the hospital have a clean email list that can shoot out an email ASAP if needed? What about text messaging? Having basic information such as current emails and cell phone numbers can immensely help to reach people quickly. People tend to calm down faster if they hear from others that they are not alone. Did a major business just close in your town?

emotion-inducing services/products might not go over very well and might deter people from coming through the door. Once the “must” services are selected, they can be used in marketing campaigns during the tough times.



A text message saying “we are here for you during these tough times” can give them peace of mind.

For future clients, how do they find services in your city/town? For some areas, Google is used more than Facebook. In other areas, it might be more word-of-mouth. Keep in mind how to reach people quickly for your area. Could that even be a radio ad or calling local service groups, like the Lions, to spread the word that you are here to help during the hard time?

**3. Ask your staff: “How can we help our clients not panic?”** Each hospital has different demographics that it caters to and needs will be different. Maybe the top 20 percent of clients who make up 80 percent of the revenue should have a personal phone call. Maybe, in poorer areas, a remote site clinic can be set up for a day to reach people who might have a difficult time reaching the hospital.

**4. Set aside a rainy-day marketing budget kitty to use for online ads.** During hard times, a business needs to market more, not less. Check out how these

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five companies/industries survived during the Great Depression, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/20837/5-great-depression-success-stories>. Most of them kept up their marketing efforts and tried new, creative approaches. Set aside some funds now to use for marketing during hard times. It helps to know that a rainy day account is there to use when you need it.

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"Having strong relationships with other business owners in town can allow group advertising and efforts during difficulty."

**5. Develop relationships with other key businesses in town.** When hard times hit a business it may affect the whole town or, at the very least, multiple vendors. Having strong relationships with other business owners in town can allow group advertising and efforts during difficulty. Maybe a cluster of businesses put on an event where people can come and receive a variety of services all at once for a low admission price. Or, a full-size newspaper ad could be split four ways between businesses. Having the ties now means that putting something in place only takes a phone call. Speed can matter.

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Kelly Baltzell, M.A. is President and CEO of the Beyond Indigo family of companies which she founded in 1997. Beyond Indigo is a full-service marketing company focusing on Search Engine Optimization, is a Google Adwords Partner, Social Media Marketing, Online Reviews and websites. She has been a monthly columnist for MWI Animal Health since 2011. She has also has presented and been published in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK.

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