

BOULEVARD REOPENING SOLUTIONS

A Guide to COVID-19 Business Strategies



As states begin to implement their reopening strategies, salon and spa customers will be eager to book services. Metropolitan areas like New York and Los Angeles may move slower, but we recognize that all of our Boulevard partners are ready for a plan of action. As you navigate the path forward, we're here to help. We've added new features to our platform and released product-focused guidance to help you reopen. We've also gathered information and ideas to help you map your business strategy in the coming months, which you can review below.

Plan for short-term business continuity

These are challenging times, and in all likelihood, these challenges will continue to impact our economy for months or even years to come. In the event of a recession, business continuity planning will be more critical than ever. Here are some strategies to help your business weather the storm.

Create a detailed roadmap

As you plan for the future, take a moment to audit your financial situation, and brainstorm worst-case scenarios. You may consider doing the following:

- *Assess your existing assets and operating capital*
- *Calculate the minimum number of customers you need to sustain your business*
- *Prioritize essential expenses and reduce overhead where possible*
- *Create a downsizing strategy that respects staff seniority and offers future support*
- *Plan a reduced operational schedule, with fewer hours while business is slow*
- *Consider trimming your own salary, and calculate what sacrifices would be sustainable*

Set up a business line of credit

If you don't already have access to a business line of credit, now is a good time to apply for one. During an economic downturn, it can be harder to access liquidity due to restrictive lending guidelines. Credit lines offer an ideal safety net for unexpected expenses. Just remember that a line of credit is different from a small business loan, which may also be a viable option depending on your situation. Business loans have lower interest rates, but they require repayment immediately. Credit lines only require payment when that big unexpected purchase actually arises. Avoid using a personal credit card to keep your business running, as this kind of high-interest debt can impact your credibility in the future.

Communicate with staff

Your staff is likely aware that things are tough. After all, it's been months since they've been allowed to offer services. The best strategy is to remain open and communicative. You don't have to share financial information, but let them know the realities of the situation. If you think you'll need to downsize or otherwise restructure your operations, give plenty of advanced notice. Being transparent will help you cultivate trust in this stressful time.

Invest in virtual relationships

Salons and spas are relationship businesses, but nation-wide stay at home orders have made connection challenging. Even after social distancing restrictions are loosened, you may not get the level of face-time you're used to with clients. Now is an essential time to double-down on virtual relationship building.

Start a beauty blog

If you're inclined towards writing, you may consider starting a beauty blog as a way to connect with clients. New and existing customers would, undoubtedly, value DIY beauty advice while they're stuck at home. Even after your reopen, a blog could be a valuable tool for building community and staying top-of-mind.

Post video tutorials

If writing isn't your thing, you may try sharing video tutorials. One big bonus to videos is it gives you a chance to showcase your skills, live and in action. Video is also a particularly effective format for explaining nuanced techniques related to color, bang-trimming, and more. Don't feel restricted to tutorials, either — you also could test new products, experiment with fun colors, or simply share your thoughts with the community.

Share tips on social media

Instagram is the platform of choice for beauty brands, salons, and spas alike — and for good reason. It's highly visual, and the platform lends itself to organic content discovery. Right now could be a great time to upload your photo backlog and showcase past work. If you're not sure of what to post, you could also share beauty inspiration or uplifting quotes. Whatever you do, be sure to write a good caption, tag friendly clients, and use a few hashtags.

Lean into digital marketing

In a post-pandemic world, new customers will very likely turn to the internet for treatments and services. They'll check online reviews, look up where to find parking, and even book online if the option is available. Now is the ideal time to make sure your digital tools and listings are helpful and accurate.

Revamp your website

Start with your website. If you have a website that showcases your work, shares a price menu and offers online booking, you're already in great shape. If not, try updating your site design and UX to be more intuitive and informative. Also, check that all existing information is up to date — have your staff or operating hours changed? Consider adding a section on personal protection equipment, and what clients should expect when they come into your business.

Audit your digital presence

Beyond your website, take the time to review your business listing on Yelp and all social platforms. If your business doesn't appear on Google Maps, you can add it for free here: <https://business.google.com>. Check that each listing reflects your accurate location and hours of operation.

Prioritize content marketing over paid ads

Content marketing — through blogs, email newsletters, and social posts — is affordable and effective. People like brands and businesses that help them solve problems and the best way to do that is through content. Meanwhile, paid ads can be costly, and small businesses don't always see significant ROI. If you do want to boost brand awareness through ads, your best bet might be to run local search ads targeting users in your area. Narrow down the list of terms you target to a few, highly relevant terms to minimize ad spend.

Reengage existing clients

When it comes to reopening, the first thing on many business owners' minds is getting people back through the doors. Fortunately, there are a few tried-and-true techniques for reengaging clients.

Reach out through email or snail mail

Depending on the scale of your business, you could send a reopening announcement through email, or deliver personalized letters to clients through the mail. If reopening is still a ways off in your area, you could still reach out with a “checking in” note — clients will undoubtedly appreciate the kind gesture.

Reward customer loyalty

Sometimes clients may need a little push to come back, and that's okay. A small coupon or an invitation to join a members-only rewards program could be enough to get clients through the door. If you're lucky, they may even share the promotion with their friends and help drive new business.

Offer retail samples and discounts

A small giveaway adds a little value to a regular appointment. If you have travel-sized products or samples on hand, consider offering them at the end of appointments. Retail discounts can also help drive sales, especially if you make it clear that it's for a limited time only.

Plan a socially distant reopening event

You may not be able to throw a full-blown party in your area, but that doesn't mean you can't promote your reopening in other ways. You could decorate your storefront, and add a sign inviting passersby to text a number to be entered in a raffle. You could host an event on Zoom for your regulars and drop party favors off curbside. At the very least, find a way to connect with your staff to share the excitement of reopening.

We're here to support you in this challenging time. Please feel free to reach out to support@blvd.co with any questions.