

Things you can do for your business until things get back to normal.

At ABoT, we're aware that some of our members have had to temporarily shut down or reduce operations to keep employees and the public safe. This includes what Health Canada is calling non-essential services like restaurants (except for delivery or take-out), hair salons, wellness professionals like massage therapists and many others.

And we are being asked to practice social distancing – staying home as much as possible, keeping your distance (6-10 feet) when serving customers or buying groceries, for example.

We are impressed with how many local people are complying with recommended practices.

We know there can be a tendency toward fear and worry in a time like this. And resentment of the changes we are being asked to make in our businesses and personally can take over, if we're not careful.

The ABoT Council would like to encourage everyone to stay calm—and take the precautions being recommended by Health Canada seriously.

If we do that together, we will all get through this sooner, with fewer negative impacts. It will limit the number of people who end up with serious consequences or lasting side-effects of the illness.

In Italy, where the situation is now much worse than China, initially, public officials minimized the seriousness of Covid-19. Now, they have insufficient medical supplies for the number of cases. Doctors having to make difficult decisions about who to treat first – a previously healthy

40-year old with children, or a 60-year old with other health problems. We don't want that here.

Feeling like there are things you can do can really help you get through difficult times.

Here are some things you can do for your business until things get back to normal:

1. Look for the opportunity in the crisis:

In every crisis, there is both danger and opportunity. The danger can make us afraid. Businesses owners who thrive in tough times learn to look for the hidden opportunities within the challenges.

Is it time to reach out and call to key clients to see how they're doing and how you can help? Not to sell them stuff, but to show you care through making personal contact. Strengthening your relationships now will build positive outcomes from increased client confidence, trust and loyalty down the road.

Could you do some work or hold meetings remotely and prepare for when things get better? **The internet and your phone are key resources right now.** Use them to stay connected with clients and suppliers.

Do background prep online and by phone – now is the time to do planning, research ideas to grow your business and do behind the scenes work that will bear fruit later.

2. Shift to a CEO Mindset

Effective CEO's focus on moving their "Important" tasks forward –the things that will grow your business but may not seem all that urgent.

In the day to day rush, we can get stuck in focusing on things that seem urgent but only keep us in the same place. We don't make time to do the things will make a real difference in growing our business.

So, if you're working from home right now or your business has had to slow down, there's a real opportunity to make some very effective changes. Because right now, you have more time.

Use this time to get on top of a few key things you know will build your business if you only made time for them.

And while you're at it, take some time for a little extra self-care, so you can get through this time with less stress and role model calm leadership to your staff.

Start planning for how you're going to bounce back when things improve. Instead of **reacting** emotionally from fear and stress – CHOOSE how you want to **respond** to the current situation.

Reach deep for your courage and your leadership and you'll be well ahead of those who aren't thinking that way.

3. Use this time to get better at Marketing.

Again, the Internet is your friend.

Take some time to research how other businesses like yours are doing their marketing. How could you do the same or do it better? What do you need to change or add? Or stop doing?

Invest in hiring a social media specialist to help you set up or improve your social media skills. Learning to communicate better with your clients and provide critical information to them online right now – will

ensure you're positioned for more success once things get back to normal.

Improving your marketing skills and activities right now will help you survive and economic downturn from this difficult time.

Effective marketing is so much more than just advertising and newsletters –so research best practices in your field—and position yourself to thrive down the road.

4. Tweak your website and online presence

Improve the content and functionality for your website and social media.

Perhaps you finally have time to write now? Or to invest in working with a professional writer to improve your web or social media content. Or, perhaps one of your staff may be a better writer than you. Brainstorm a list of blog topics. And get to it.

Starting or adding to a blog that gives helpful tips to your clients and prospective clients will demonstrate your expertise and help build trust. Build up a 6-month supply of blog posts and then you can just post every so often.

5. Use this time to get more organized

Set up better systems and processes for tracking your financials or doing estimating and invoicing. Talk to your bookkeeper or accountant to get help to make your processes easier for you—and them. It will save you money.

Automate! Make a list of things you do over and over and find ways to automate them. A good virtual assistant can be a real help here and will

be worth every penny you spend to get them to help you automate your repetitive processes.

Clean up your desk, get on top of any backlog of filing. It will make everything seem easier when you no longer have to look for critical pieces of paper in the big pile accumulating on your desk.

6. Clean up your computer

Clean up your files, remove duplicates and make sure you have good electronic and cloud-based back-up systems—and that they're scheduled to run at the right times.

Talk to your IT professional and have them do some remote clean-up, getting rid of potential viruses and other online nasties that may be lurking in the background of your operating system. They can usually do this remotely, so no need to have them come into your home or office.

Do the same with your e-mail. Put on an informative or entertaining podcast and spend some time deleting old e-mails or putting them in subject files.

7. Learn something new - and focus on positive thinking

There's a tendency to get mesmerized by all the scary and negative information out there right now, so stay informed each day – and limit the amount of time you tune in to negative news coverage, so it doesn't overwhelm you.

Focus on learning: listen to podcasts, research best practices in your field—and especially, listen to information designed to help you keep a positive mindset.

Whatever you think and believe will come back to you and become your reality – so, watch out for the kind of information you feed into your

brain. Focus on visualizing the brighter future you want to move toward.

Look for all the good that is happening, despite the challenges we are all facing. People are helping each other and their community. In parts of China, pollution and noise are down. Family members and friends, clients and suppliers are realizing how important they are to each other.

Share your ideas for how you are successfully coping, staying positive and getting ahead of the current challenges. Share helpful information and good news stories on Facebook and other social media.

If we pull together, help each other stay positive and respect the need to be socially responsible and do the right things, we will get through these challenging times.

It will get better, it's just a matter of time.

Use your current extra time well, and you'll thrive.