

5 SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS FOR COVID-19

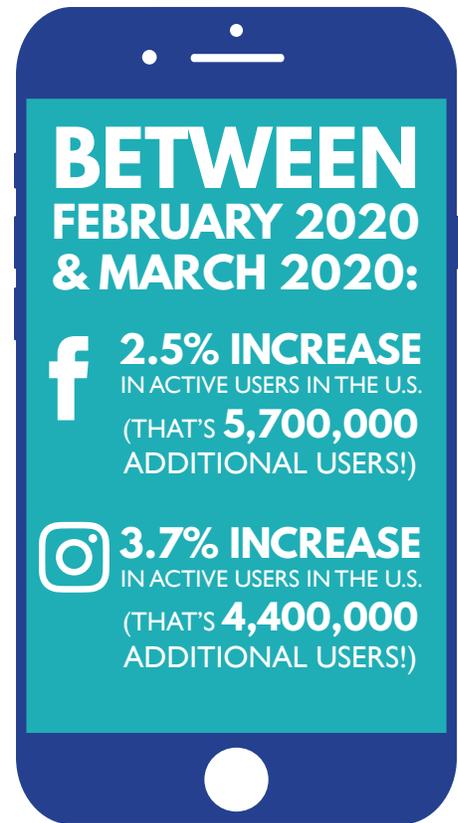
(and a 5-day content strategy example!)

1. Be present.

Social distancing has led to a social media surge.

There are more people on social media. People are spending more time on social media. For your farmers market or vendor business, it's more important than ever before to be present on social media. Pre-coronavirus, social media was a valuable marketing tool for businesses and a fun way for people to connect and be entertained. Now, social media is a crucial tool for communication, connection, and entertainment.

Of the three major platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter), we highly recommend farmers market managers and vendors focus on Facebook and Instagram. Because of its broad user group and additional capabilities with events, groups, marketplace, and targeting, Facebook will give you the most return on your investment of time, effort, and (if you choose) money.



Checklist: Are your profiles set up and accurate?

- Create your Facebook page.**
Fill out the About and Contact Info sections as completely as possible. Consider noting hours/operations impacted by COVID-19.
- Create your Instagram account and connect it to your Facebook page.**
When you post something on Instagram, you can automatically publish it to Facebook also.
- Review and update the About and Contact Info sections of your Facebook page.**
Is the phone number correct? Have your hours changed? If you have a website, is it listed? Consider noting hours/operations impacted by COVID-19.
- Set up your notification preferences.**
Do you want notifications on your phone? Do you prefer to receive emails? Make sure you're set up to receive notifications according to your preferences so that you don't miss a comment or inbox message.
- Set your logo as your profile picture.**
This will help increase brand recognition for your farmers market/vendor business.
- Use the cover image for COVID-19 updates.**
Create a simple graphic or photo with text overlay to communicate important announcements/changes. (Canva.com and PicMonkey.com are free, easy-to-learn online tools for creating social media graphics.)

2. Focus less on what time. Focus more on being timely.

It's okay (and probably for the best) to NOT plan out your content more than one week in advance.

Change is constant. An idea you had yesterday may not be relevant or even possible today. Social media calendars are useful tools for staying on track, but many social media marketers who have planned out posts in advance must now scrap much of that content.

Focus on the present. Think about what's most relevant and post it promptly. Posting three times a week is still a great goal, but if ever there was a time to post once a day, that time is now.

Try to plan out content for the week ahead, but know that it may have to change on a day-to-day basis. If you can look further ahead to oncoming weeks, what can you anticipate that could require you to pivot? For example: if there's a possibility of postponing the market another month, you can create a rough draft of that post now. Keep it handy so that when you need it, you can adapt it without scrambling.



Refreshing for fresh content is frequent.

People are refreshing their feeds more often. They want more content and new content. Facebook is looking for more, new content to put in front of users and fulfill that demand. Pre-coronavirus, Facebook algorithms generally discouraged posting multiple times within a few hours. For example: If you posted five posts in two hours, you may expect followers to see all five posts. In reality, Facebook algorithms might put one or two of those posts in front of your followers. Now that the demand for content is so high, there's a better chance of followers seeing five posts within a short timeframe. Don't wear yourself out constantly posting. But if you do have extra things to say and share, feel free to. For the time being at least, it's okay—and even encouraged.

Checklist: Switch off auto-posts and switch gears on your calendar:

Un-schedule any scheduled posts.

If you planned out and scheduled posts to automatically publish via Facebook Publisher or a similar app, un-schedule those posts. If they're still relevant, you can manually publish them. But you don't want to accidentally publish something that may be irrelevant or tone-deaf when it goes live.

Schedule time on your own calendar to dedicate to social media.

Social media calendars provide structure and accountability, but daily COVID-19 changes make hard to plan too far in advance. Instead, devote time on your personal calendar to check in on social media and create content that's relevant and timely.

3. Give people information. Then, give people a break.

Re-frame your social media content strategy.

A content strategy is how you plan, create, deliver, and manage what you post on social media—words, images, and video. Your strategy match your goals, such as getting people to shop the market, buy your products, or sign up for your CSA.

During this time of weekly (even daily) change, a strategy should be straightforward but also flexible. A helpful way to think about this is to make sure each piece of content fulfills one of two important goals: 1) Communication (giving people information) and 2) Connection (giving people a break). Sometimes content does both, but try to give every post a purpose.

Consider also the balance of what you post. If you only post information, people may begin to feel less engaged and less likely to interact. If you post too much “fun stuff,” your audience may miss out on important details and you may miss out on sales.

Let’s break down some ideas for both sides of the strategy:

Communicate: Give people information.

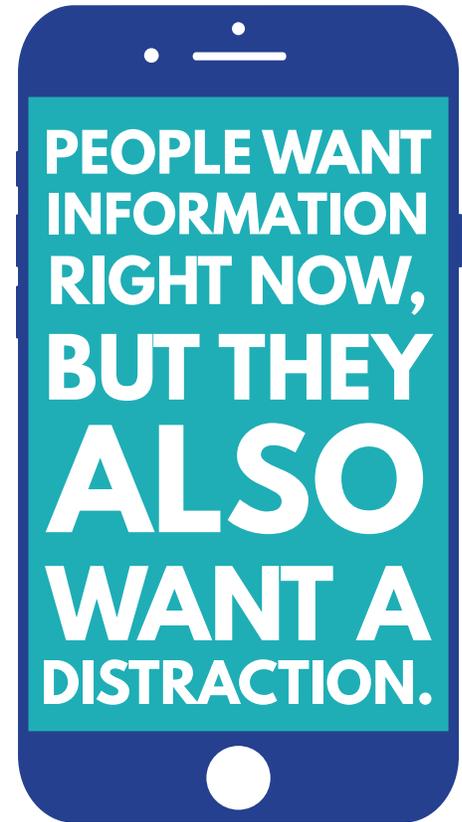
This side of your strategy is to get the word out about announcements, changes, and updates related to COVID-19 and its impact on your market and/or vendor business, such as:

- cancellations and postponements
- addition of new services/products
(drive-thru market, curbside pickup, delivery)
- additions or changes to processes
(online ordering, contact-less payment)
- implementation of new rules/guidelines
(only one shopper per household,
no on-site consumption of food/drink,
temporary ban on fabric reusable bags)
- reminders
(where to park, safety measures,
new market dates/hours/location)

Connect: Give people a break.

When inundated with information, social media users can experience fatigue. Engagement can drop. That’s okay. That’s why it’s also important to give your audience a diversion, such as something:

- funny that makes them laugh
(a meme, a humorous story or video clip)
- beautiful that makes them pause
(a scenic farm view, a blooming flower,
something growing/sprouting in the garden)
- light that makes them smile
(cute kids and animals, a tasty recipe)
- interesting to make them think
(little-known facts about certain veggies,
history trivia about your farm/market/town)
- uplifting to give them hope
(good news, heartwarming stories)



4. Get ready for your close-up

Video isn't going anywhere.

Before social distancing, video on social media was fun and personal. It got the best reach and engagement. It helped show the human behind the business or organization. That's all still true, but now it's also crucial for communication and connection. People miss people. Many want to see faces and hear voices outside of those in their household. When in-person isn't possible, video is the next best thing. It's being used to celebrate birthdays with families, host happy hours with friends and co-workers, do book clubs, conduct board meetings, and so much more.

Now's the time for you to use video as a valuable communication and connection tool for your market/business. Post videos of yourself and your team. Talk directly to followers and customers. Experiment with Facebook Live and Instagram Live. Scroll through TikTok to see viral video trends. Ask followers and vendors to create short videos you can share.



Checklist: Get Started with Video

Clean Your Camera Lens

Make it habit to wipe off your phone's camera lens with a soft cloth before taking photos/video.

Prevent Shaky & Blurry Footage

You can buy an inexpensive tripod and/or stabilizer for your phone online. Or, do a search for DIY options.

Shorter is Better

Attention spans are short. Keep your video under one minute. Better yet, keep it under :30 seconds.

Free Video App Roundup:

Over (iPhone, Android)

Edit photos/videos. and allows you to design social media posts using customizable templates.

Adobe Premiere Clip (iPhone, Android)

Automatically creates a video for you using selected photos/videos, or allows you to create a custom video.

Filmora (iPhone, Android)

Powerful video editor without watermark or time limit.

iMovie (iPhone)

Record and edit video on-the-go on your iPhone.

Boomerang (iPhone, Android)

Takes a series of photos and turns them into a short video that plays forward and backward over and over.

Hyperlapse (iPhone)

Creates timelapse videos up to 12x the original speed.

Hyperlapse by Microsoft (Android)

Creates timelapse videos up to 32x the original speed.

Adobe Spark (iPhone, Android)

Helps you easily and quickly make videos, images, and stories for social media.

5. Right now, on social media...

It's okay to be **repetitive** in what you post.

Example: You post an update about how the market is postponed and how you're evaluating the situation each week. Next week rolls around and nothing has changed. It's okay to publish a similar post. A week is a LONG time on social media right now. New followers might not have seen last week's post. Existing followers may be wondering if anything has changed. Don't copy/paste the last update, but do go ahead and post something similar—even if it feels like you're repeating yourself.

Try to deliver details in **different ways**.

Example: It's been decided that the market will be open so long as new safety guidelines are enforced. Post an update that announces the date/time and lists those important guidelines. The next day, do a post explaining one of those guidelines. Another day, explain a different guideline. And another day, post a 30-second video explaining the guidelines as though talking to a customer in-person. By communicating in different ways, you appeal to different followers and catch their attention in different ways.

It's not insensitive to be **nostalgic**.

Example: Your market is postponed, but last year at this time you were promoting opening day and the live music, kids activities, and food samples that were part of it. You have a great photo of last year's crowded opening day, but wonder if it's insensitive to share such a reminder right now. It's not insensitive. People may not be able to travel, but they're still daydreaming about past and future vacations. They may not be able to dine in their favorite restaurants, but they're still talking about which one they'll go first when "things get back to normal." Feel free to post those memories as a throwback to happier times. Just be sensitive in your language. "We all had so much fun at last year's opening day. We hope markets look like this again soon! What's your favorite market activity?" Many social media users want to bond over "those days" and look forward to getting the market back to normal.

Be authentic. Better yet, be **vulnerable**.

It mattered before, it matters more now. People feel isolated from businesses and organizations they once so easily interacted with. As a result, many people feel helpless. And many people don't know how to help unless someone tells and shows them. If your market or business is struggling, if something bad happened, if there's a way that people can make a difference... use social media share that. Show the human behind the Facebook page. Ask for help. Can people donate? Buy gift cards? Order online and pick up later? Make masks? Can they simply share your post to help spread the word? Tell followers very clearly how they can contribute.



Pause before you post.

Many of us are feeling under pressure and beyond stressed—and that's okay. That's expected. But posting on social media when rushed or emotional leaves extra room for error. The error could be an embarrassing little typo you can fix by editing the post. Or, it could be an error in judgment. You could accidentally post something that comes across as irrelevant, sounds tone-deaf, or contributes to unnecessary negativity and anxiety. A typo may earn you a snarky comment. An error in judgment may bring backlash.

It's always been important to pause and check your post before publishing. Now, you need to pause longer.

When you've got your post ready to publish, take a deep breath, pause, and consider what you're about to put out there. If you have any doubt, have a trusted friend or colleague look it over, too.

Checklist: What to Ask Before You "Post" or "Share"

Is this relevant and timely?
Does it fit with what's going on in the world today?
Is it related to my market? Will my audience care?

Is this valuable and helpful?
Does it contribute something? Is it useful?

Does this contribute to anxiety or create panic?
Many social media accounts feed off of and fuel collective anxiety and fear. Try to stay on the positive side. Word choice can make all the difference. What picture are you painting for your followers? For example: "Stuck at home" paints a different picture than "Safe at home."

"Stuck" implies frustration, reminding people that they're lonely, bored, miss loved ones, have been laid off, etc. "Safe" implies gratitude, reminding people that they're contributing to a greater good, flattening the curve, and saving lives.

Is this tone-deaf?
Does the post consider where your followers are and what they're experiencing? Many are at home—some working remotely, some furloughed/laid off, some homeschooling children. They're staying in and dining in. How can you present your products/services in a way that resonates with their new normal?



Is this from a trustworthy source?
Social media is a breeding ground for rumors and fake news. What you post on your business page must not only be relevant to your farmers market or vendor business, but ALSO legitimate and truthful. Whether you're about to post news you heard secondhand or share something to your page, check into its source.

For example: You see an article about the impact of COVID-19 on local food producers. You check and see that it's from a trustworthy newspaper. Plus, it's relevant to your market/vendor page. That's a great piece of content to post/share on your page.

Another example: You see an article about all the different vaccines in development. You check and see that it's from a trustworthy news source. It's interesting, but it is difficult to relate to your market/vendor business. This post is better suited for posting/sharing on your personal profile.

If something is not clearly from a trustworthy source or you have any doubt, don't post or share it at all.

Sample

5-Day COVID-19 Content Strategy

- 5 posts total, all weekdays (3-5 posts/week is a great goal)
- 4 posts give important info
- Friday's post gives people a break (here, a cute pet + invitation to engage)
- 4 posts include an image (text-only posts are easy to miss, but photos/graphics grab attention)
- Monday's important info requires a longer post, but a **bulleted list** breaks it up and makes it easier to read.
- Tuesday's and Wednesday's posts **repeat info** from Monday's post by highlighting it with a **graphic** and additional context.
- Thursday's **Facebook Live** shows the face behind the market: the manager (video gets the best reach + engagement, plus people miss human interaction and video is the next best thing!)

MONDAY



TUESDAY



WEDNESDAY



THURSDAY



FRIDAY

