



24 Ways to Grow in the Age of Covid

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The pandemic has forced many of us to focus on the survival of our businesses. Here are 24 ways to help you move beyond survival mode and achieve the seemingly impossible—to address the evolving demands of the nightlife industry and grow in the age of Covid!

Renovation and Design

- ◆ Don't break the bank, but use downtime or limited hours to improve your club with items on hand or inexpensive **DIY projects**—paint, stain and epoxy away!
- ◆ There are lots of easy ways to add **branding**; consider decals that look like etched glass on mirrors, logos set under a layer of epoxy, wall murals, or jpegs/animation on your TVs.
- ◆ We all need an extra dose of festivity—visit your local Party City or Dollar Store for **seasonal decorations**. Focus on the entrance/lobby, bar and main stage, then hang decorations from the ceiling or fixtures throughout.
- ◆ Remember, conserving cash is no excuse not to tend to everyday repairs, and **deep cleaning** is a no-budget way to make your club look, feel and smell like new!

Marketing & Promotion

- ◆ Save your mass media spend and focus almost exclusively on low cost **digital marketing**—email, text and social. (For tips on how to build a database from scratch, email me!)
- ◆ In this time of uncertainty, a reliable **digital presence** is a must and builds trust between you and the guest—update your hours on your web/social sites and 3rd party listings, and be upfront about house rules and operating restrictions, as well as your cleaning and safety procedures.
- ◆ Whether you ran a **referral program** in the past, consider implementing a modest one now. Hotel, restaurant and bar staff are all looking for additional income and may be motivated to get your passes to the right people. Look for businesses that aren't in competition with you, such as exotic dancewear boutiques (for entertainers), drivers and restaurants that close earlier than the club.
- ◆ **Internal marketing** is one of the easiest and most-overlooked ways to cultivate repeat clientele; methods include signage, TV JPEGS, QR codes (to replace table toppers for now), DJ announcements and service staff initiatives.

Entertainment

- ♦ Besides promotions for guests, consider an **entertainer-oriented promotion** as well—such as 5 Ways to Earn Lease Fee Discounts. (Check with your attorney with respect to contract/labor law.)
- ♦ Consider producing an **orientation video** for new entertainers; it's no replacement for a personal orientation and tour, but it helps with consistency and ensures your message gets through. Besides, entertainers KNOW how to watch videos!
- ♦ Use Covid as a prime excuse to do what you've wanted to do all along—**clean up the dancing!** Consider creating and enforcing distance and contact guidelines; don't worry so much about what the competition is doing!
- ♦ If your talent is inconsistent, augment your show with other attractions—varied music genres, interactive MCs, shots girls, go-go dancers, etc..

Beverage & Food

- ♦ Big budget events may be on hold for now, but use creative food and beverage **programming**, menus and features to create promotional content.
- ♦ DON'T be afraid to run a daily, happy hour or late night **special**, as permitted. With prospective guests uncertain about everything from the safety of patronizing bars to their own finances, they may need a compelling reason to visit. However ...
- ♦ ... run specials that **cater to the clientele you WANT**—not necessarily the clientele you have.
- ♦ For those of you who previously viewed **food** as an amenity you can no longer afford to offer; don't close your kitchens. Adapt, learn to manage cost, and offer your guests something—even a few hot bar bites—to enhance their experience.

Hospitality

- ♦ Use this unwelcome reboot to **rehire and retrain**, focusing on all those nagging issues and pet peeves you never had the opportunity to address before.
- ♦ New Covid procedures, state regulations and promotions make **communication** more key than ever. Hold frequent pre-shifts and utilize actual and digital message boards and groups.
- ♦ Manage payroll, but **resist the urge to understaff**. If your talent lineup is inconsistent, you'll rely on staff more than ever to engage guests, pull off theme nights and receive business during peak times. Try to schedule one more person than you think you need.
- ♦ **Train everyone to do a second job**. Not only will this give you more flexibility with scheduling, but cross-trained staff often feel more invested in the club.

Systems, Analysis & Controls

- ♦ **Manage your P&L**, now more than ever. For those of you whose rent “abatements” were actually amortized over the twelve months following your reopening, that can significantly affect your breakeven and cause you to realign your goals.
- ♦ If you still have some downtime, spring cleaning extends to POS and other systems. **Clean up your database**, make sure employee paperwork/arbitration agreements/entertainer contracts are in order, and be sure your POS is set up optimally for analysis—you're going to need it.
- ♦ Yes, you need to watch expenses and conserve cash, but **don't cut it to the bone**, or you'll never be able to build!
- ♦ This is the last thing you want to think about now, but if you didn't have a **retained earnings account** or “rainy day fund,” you realize the importance of it today. Put away whatever you can, as soon as you can, in a systematic way. Be ahead of the next crisis!