

Selling in a post-lockdown world

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Andrew Sauerwine suggests five key strategies



So, we're getting there... slowly. The "new normal" is taking shape, and both sales people and buyers are emerging from furlough and playing catch up. By this time of year in the "old normal", we'd be well into our Christmas discussions, but understanding what the next few months hold, let alone what autumn and the all-important "Golden Quarter" will look like, is for most publishers and retailers a daunting task. Budgets are up in the air, and there are crucial decisions to be made about what to publish, when to publish, or even whether to publish this year at all.

The sharp end of the process, the sell-in to retail, is in the short to mid-term going to become even sharper. So what sales strategies should be front of mind to get the best results? I have five tips that I believe will get the best possible return at a challenging time.

Think consumer first and last

There are huge changes not only to buying habits, but crucially to consumer interest areas right now. The current unique set of circumstances has united the nation, and even the world, in ways that were unimaginable before. Young, old, rich, poor; today's consumer is no longer as diversified as yesterday's.

There's a commonality to our experience from being forcibly separated from family and friends, to an almost primal need to reconnect with nature, to a fear for an entire generation's education, and many more collective focal points that create meaningful buying patterns. Bringing these incredibly powerful sales drivers into the heart of conversations with retailers will ensure that you're speaking a common language. A word of caution though: this consumer has evolved very quickly, and evolution is far from over. Keeping a finger on the pulse of change is critical.

Less is more

Focus on less in presentations. Part of the value of a sales person is to have curated an offering that aligns the target consumer with the right retail partner. Further streamlining that process now will ensure that you're talking about the right titles in a focused and valuable way that retailers will thank you for.



Dedicate presentation time to discovery

Time with retailers is precious, and although selling in books is the undeniable priority, you need to understand how retailers see the current market challenges and opportunities. What space in store are they investing in? What's their online strategy now? What do they see as key to a successful autumn?

Systems and process are king

In a world where sell-in time will be squeezed, best in class systems, process, forecasting and analytics will become invaluable tools to support retailer performance. Forecasting models in particular will be scrutinised this autumn. Understanding the supply chain and expected sales shapes will be critical as retailers reduce their initial buy quantities even further, relying on ordering little and often to meet demand in an enhanced JIT (just in time) model.

Black Friday boost

The previously US-centric sale season has slowly become more of a retail focal point in the UK over the last decade. With lockdown accelerating a market share shift to online, combined with a downward pressure on prices caused by economic uncertainty, this period should be even more explosive in volume terms. The sales gap between Black Friday and Christmas week is likely to contract significantly, and everybody needs to be re-prioritising these key weeks in their strategic thinking.

If you'd like to read more on my thoughts on the key consumer segments that are particularly interesting for this autumn and why, click [here](#); or if you'd like to discuss how I can help your business, please contact me on andrew@workwithcpc.co.uk.

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