



## ECONOMIC VITALITY IDEAS AMONG THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

**Let's face it**—the coronavirus pandemic is affecting all businesses and industries across the board, including our small-town businesses right here in Hamilton. Whether you own or work at a restaurant, hair salon, or a professional services industry, you may be working at home, finding yourself with storefront doors closed temporarily, or doing your best to keep those doors open.

The best strategy we can offer ourselves right now is innovation and creativity. How can we survive and keep our town's businesses open?

After reviewing information from Main Street America and Texas Main Street, I have a few ideas. Some will work better for certain industries than others, but maybe we should consider the list to help stabilize our businesses. Even one idea could make a difference for short- or long-term planning.

- **Create an Online Presence**—If you don't have a Facebook page or a webpage, now may be a great time to consider one...or update the one that you have.
  - **Facebook Page**—A free way to get an online presence with options to promote your page at cost (click [here](#)).
  - **Create a website**—There are a ton of online free tutorials and vary based on the platform you choose. Most website hosts have a monthly cost. (Click [here](#) to learn more.) Below are some popular options:
    - **Vistaprint**—Offering a free trial and then \$3.74 a month for hosting. The site also offers postcards, business cards, photos, and a variety of other marketing tools that can match your website.
    - **Godaddy**—Offering \$11.99 for the first year with Office 365, email, and web hosting, along with free tools and advice.
    - **Wix**—Offering free website building with upgrades available.
    - **Weebly**—Offers a website or online store, currently offering a free custom domain for one year.
  - **Grow with Google**—Free tools and resources to help you learn remote work. Google is also offering a 14-day free trial for GSuite (click [here](#)) which offers email, online chats, virtual meetings, document creations, website building, cloud storage, and multiple users and devices.
- **Develop Online Shopping**—For retail, there is a myriad of options to sell products online, whether on your own website or sites:
  - **Shopify**—Offering a 90-day free trial.
  - **Facebook Marketplace**—Buy and sell in your local community, mainly for the public, but can sell anything from appliances to land.
  - **Amazon**—Can sell online for \$39.99 a month.
  - **Online Shopping List Services**—Remember online shopping does not mean you have to ship everything but instead can offer to pick up or deliver so people can grab and go.



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- **Sell Online Courses**—On your website, you can also offer and sell courses.
  - [Kajabi](#)—Offering a 14-day free trial to create, market, and sell courses, subscriptions, and digital products.
  - [Learning Revolution](#)—discusses 15+ Different platforms to create and sell online courses.
- **Post Online Videos or Virtual Tours**—These have public free access to help you gain more consumer engagement. YouTube will even start paying you if your online presence grows large enough.
  - [Facebook Live](#)—Can connect and engage your audience.
  - [LinkedIn Live](#)—Can complete an application to broadcast live videos.
  - [YouTube](#)—Can create a [YouTube video](#) (one-time post) or [YouTube channel](#) (a channel for your business)
- **Conduct Virtual Meetings**—Currently, Governor Abbot has allowed even public open meetings to be online. So why not for your services? This would be great for any professional service, whether for large meeting groups or just one-on-one appointments. Most offer a phone conference option for those who are not computer savvy too.
  - [Zoom](#)—Offers a free version for unlimited one-on-one meetings up to 40 minutes each session. Unlimited time is offered in the next-up package at \$14.99 a month.
  - [BlueJeans](#)—Offer three types of trials. Cheapest plan hosts up to 50 participants in one meeting, plus unlimited group or one-on-one meetings and five hours of recordings.
  - [GoToMeeting](#)—Offering a 14-day free trial to host meetings up to 250 people. The cheapest plan is now offered at \$12 a month for up to 150 participants.
- **Modernize Payment Options**—Do you accept debit/credit card payments? How about PayPal, Apple Pay, or Square?
  - **Credit Card Processing Companies**—Read this [article](#) for some popular options.
  - [PayPal](#)—Can send money or shop using PayPal and can be added to most websites as an option. It also offers business loans.
  - [Apple Pay](#)—operates on Apple devices in stores, text messages, apps, or websites. For consumers, stores a digital version of debit/credit cards on phones. For merchants, offered through a point-of-sale terminal at no additional fee from Apple.
  - [Square](#)—A new type of point of sale that offers to sell online, a terminal, contactless or chip transactions, a stand, a register, or a magstripe (attaches to a cell phone) versions.
- **Offer Gift Cards/Certificates**—Gift Certificates are a great idea for customers to buy now and use later. Are you offering this just in-store or a digital version?
  - [GiftFly](#)—Offers business owners a way to create, sell and market their own eGift cards. Offers promotions and fundraisers too. This is free for merchants and has a processing fee of 2.70% plus \$0.30 per card transaction.
  - [GiftUp](#)—Offers online gift cards at no monthly fees or setup costs, but has 3.49% transaction fees or alternative packages.
  - **More Ideas**—Read this [article](#) for 10 more platform ideas.



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- **Provide Special Hours or Appointments**—Some businesses are offering Senior Hours or are in store by appointment only. This limits how many are in your store at one time and can help ensure the health safety of your customers.
- **Show-Off Clean Facilities**—If your storefront is still open, are you cleaning your facilities as suggested by the [CDC](#)? Are you wearing latex gloves and offering hand sanitizer? If so, why not brag about it? Safety is everyone's top priority right now and marketing on your strengths will be key. So, if you are cleaning everything top to bottom, be sure to advertise it.
- **Market Locally Sourced Products**—Do you offer local products? Market them! The benefits are that you most likely have your products faster and there is less product handling.
- **Share Future Plans**—Share your plans with your customers to keep them anticipating new products or services after the virus.
- **Review Business Interruption Insurance**—Check with your commercial insurance company as to whether you qualify for Business Interruption Insurance. Here's an [article](#) about how COVID-19 may apply.
- **Check on an Economic Injury Disaster Loan**—Please review the [website](#) for information, eligibility, and the application.
- **Consider Crowdfunding**—I would like to suggest this option to companies hit the hardest at this time. Most people have heard of GoFundMe, and that's exactly what I am suggesting for your business. Some industries will have to close their storefronts and not have another service or product to turn to, which may leave loans, grants, or crowdfunding as the next ideas. Here is a [website](#) explaining the Top 35 Crowdfunding Sites last year.

***Like an idea but need help?***

***Have another idea you would like to share?***

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