

# Pet Care Services Action Plan



Constant Contact

**If you're feeling overwhelmed and unsure of what actions to take during this time, use this guide to get you started. Here's what we'll cover:**

**Keeping safe**

- Protecting yourself
- Protecting your customers and their pets

**Assessing and generating solutions**

- Identifying short-term modifications
- Starting to think long term

**Adapting and overcoming**

- Converting to digital solutions
- Putting a plan into action

**Staying in contact**

- Updating your communication channels
- Reaching out to customers

**Marketing during this time**

- Being sensitive and respectful
- Gauging the appropriate path

**Planning for the future**

- Thinking ahead
- Using what you've learned



The COVID-19 (coronavirus) situation is changing the way we all do business. And there is much we still don't know about how this situation will play out.

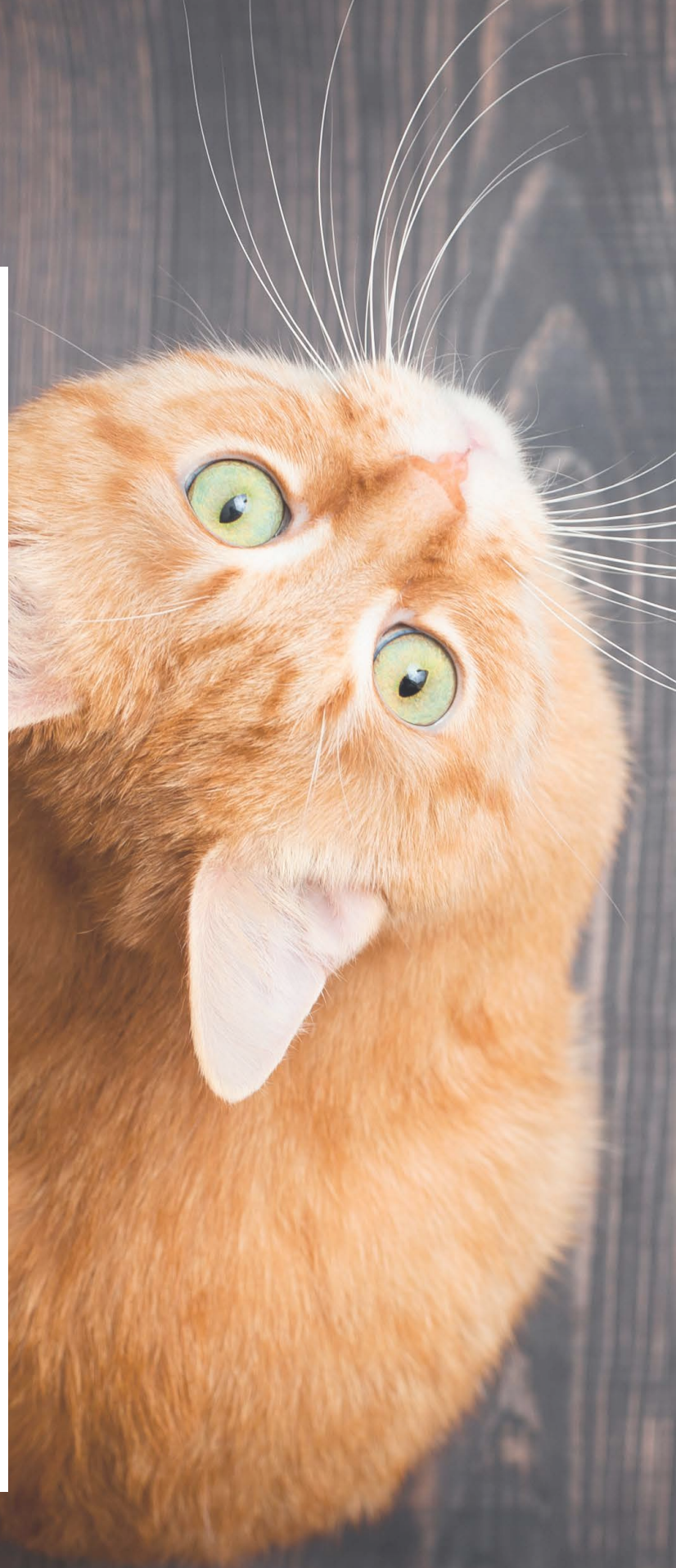
As this unprecedented crisis continues to evolve, many pet supply store owners, groomers, dog daycare owners, and other pet care professionals find themselves scrambling to adapt. In some areas, pet care businesses have been forced to close entirely or to halt services until social distancing policies are lifted. For those who can remain open, new policies must be put into place to keep workers, customers, and animals safe. Across the board, pet care professionals are in need of ways to minimize losses and protect their businesses.

Here's the thing — small business owners are some of the most resourceful and resilient people we know. And now's the time to lean into that resourcefulness, make a plan, and get to work. If you're feeling overwhelmed and are unsure of what actions to take, this guide will serve as a good starting point.

Let's take a look at some ways that you can take stock of the situation, generate solutions, and take action to protect your pet care business.

As you know, things are developing rapidly. So, it's important to remain flexible in order to make changes on the fly.

Remember, you've got us and can get [Constant Contact Help and Support](#) when you need it.



# Safety First

Your first priority is to make sure that your family, staff, and especially yourself, are safe and safeguarded, to the best of your ability.

Next, make sure that you're doing everything you can to safeguard your customers.

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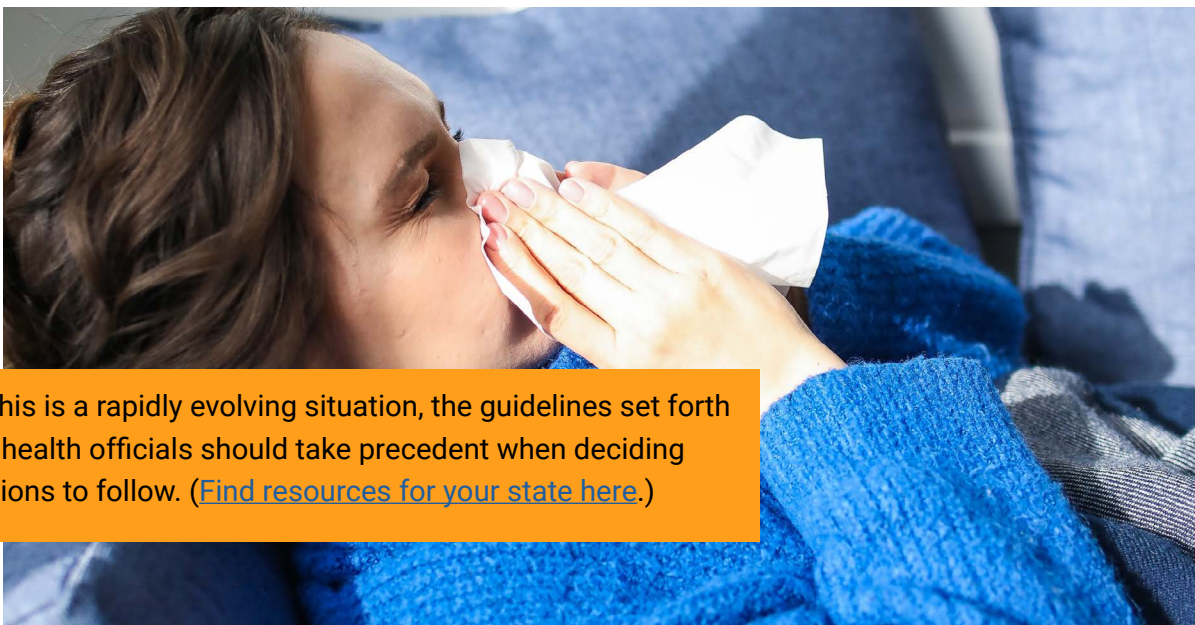
Implement [CDC-recommended precautions](#) in your business as soon as possible. Among the most important recommendations are:



- ☐ **Actively encourage employees, especially those who are sick, to stay home. Implement systems that allow them to work from home if possible.**
- ☐ **Emphasize the importance of cough and sneeze etiquette as well as hand hygiene within your business.**
- ☐ **Perform routine, thorough environmental cleaning.**
- ☐ **People that are sick with COVID-19 (suspected or confirmed) should limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus.**

Once you've done what you can for everyone's health and safety, it's time to figure out how this situation may affect your business.

It's likely you're already feeling the impact. In any emergency, large or small, you'll often have to assess and reassess to generate solutions because things are always changing.



**Note:** Since this is a rapidly evolving situation, the guidelines set forth by your local health officials should take precedent when deciding what precautions to follow. ([Find resources for your state here.](#))

# Assess and generate solutions

Since there are a lot of unknowns, it's important to think about various possibilities and what you can do to adapt to them. The problems you face will vary depending on the nature of your pet business, and so your solutions will vary too. Regulations and recommendations are different depending on if your business involves direct contact with animals, or if you just sell animal care supplies, so it's important to look at the questions directly and make a plan based on what your business is able to do. Below are some examples of things you may need to consider.

You may want to write things down as you think through these questions and your answers. It'll help you formulate your action plan.

## How does the coronavirus (COVID-19) affect pets? What are the guidelines for social distancing when animals are involved?

- ☐ As mentioned, people that are sick with COVID-19 (suspected or confirmed) should limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus. If you must be around animals while you are sick, wash your hands before and after you interact with them.

## Is my business considered "essential"? Am I allowed to stay open?

- ☐ The answer depends on your local regulations. In most parts of the country, pet supply stores are considered essential and allowed to stay open, while many grooming and dog daycare businesses have been forced to close.

## What if you end up short on staff?

- ☐ Think about reducing your hours or days that you're open.

## What if you have a problem keeping certain items in stock?

- ☐ Check your supply channels to find out how long it will take to get new stock.
- ☐ Think about limiting high-demand items to one or two per person.

## What if you get sick?

- ☐ Designate someone else to be in charge of the daily operations.

## What can you do to help your staff?

- ☐ Can you continue to pay them if they can't come in?
- ☐ Do you have something you can give them to help them out?

## What can you do to help your customers?

- ☐ Can you offer discounts so they can save money on the items they need?
- ☐ Can you share knowledge on how to keep their pets engaged and healthy at this time?

## What can you do to help your community?

- ☐ Do you have supplies or goods that you can donate to a local animal shelter or rescue organization?

And at some point you may have to ask the bigger questions:

### What if I have to temporarily close?

- Think about how you'll engage customers through the closure so they'll be ready to bring you business after the crisis passes.

### Is the "temporary" plan you put into place sustainable? If so, for how long?

- If not, are there things you can do to adjust your plan so it will be sustainable?

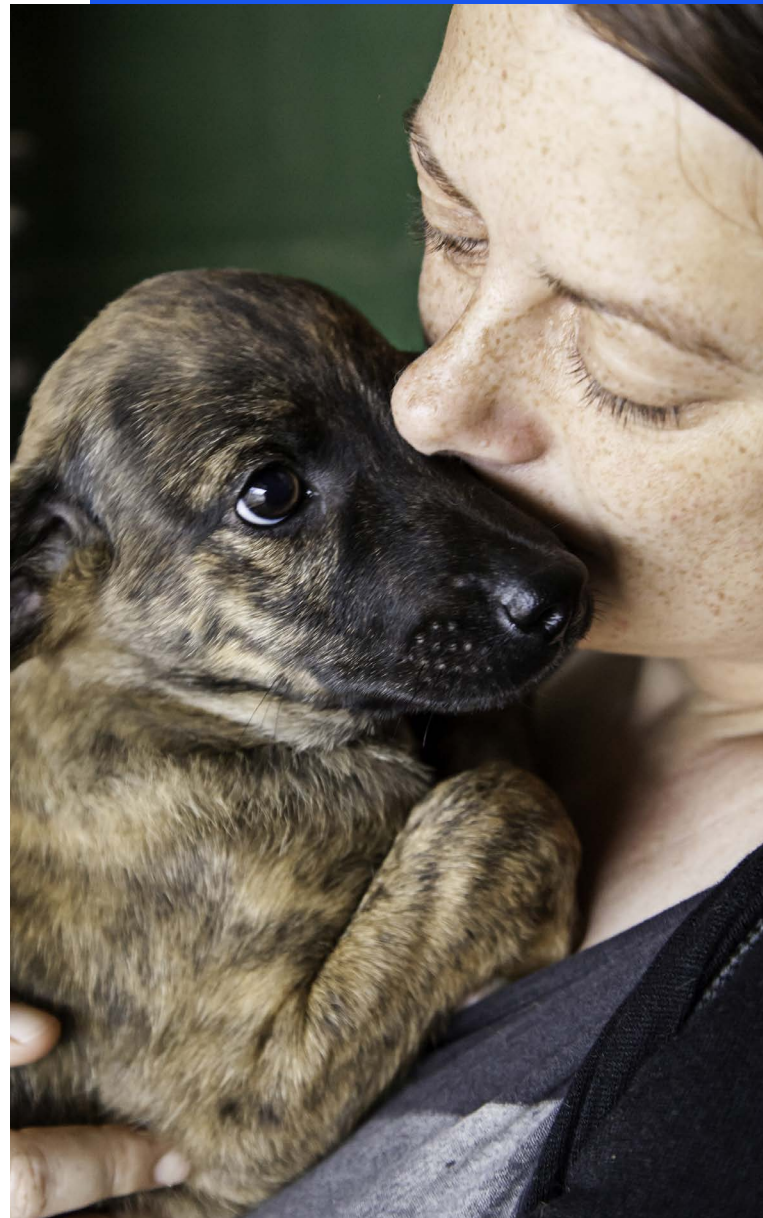
### What if this lasts several weeks or months?

- How would this affect your family, as well as your staff and their families — can you help them in some way?

### Are there any other resources available to you?

We've compiled a list of resources for you.

[Resources for Small Businesses Impacted by COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)



# Adapt and overcome

Your “business as usual” may no longer exist. You’ll need to adapt to get through these trying times. Some things to consider:



## Working from home

If you can, set up work from home options for yourself and your employees.

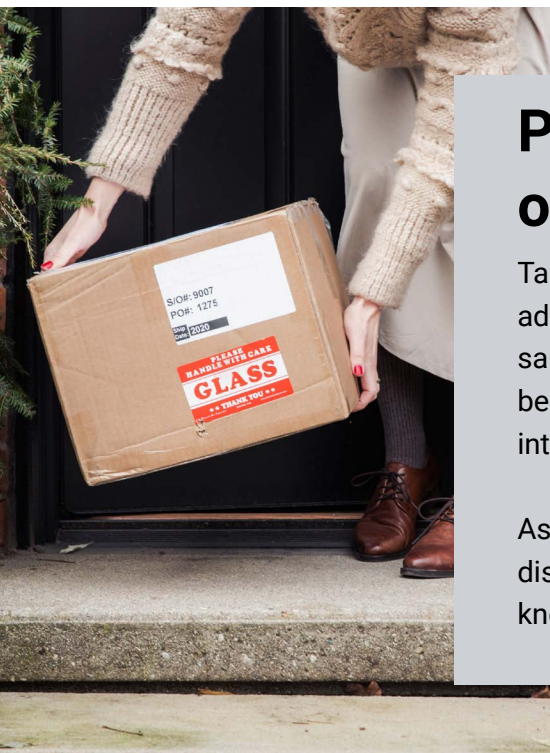
Set up a workstation that can stay in place for as long as you need it. Create a space where everyone in the family knows that if you’re in it, you’re working. This can help you to stay focused when you’re working and set boundaries between working and hanging out at home.

## Selling items online

If you haven’t been selling items online, now’s your chance to start. Your Constant Contact account comes with tools that make it quick and easy to start selling online. You can create shoppable landing pages or a full website with an online store.

Even if your business is service-based, think about selling gift cards for future use, and if you have an incentive program, think about giving extra points for shopping during this time. You can also consider selling merchandise with your company’s logo. People are eager to show support for small businesses at this time, especially those who serve their beloved pets.





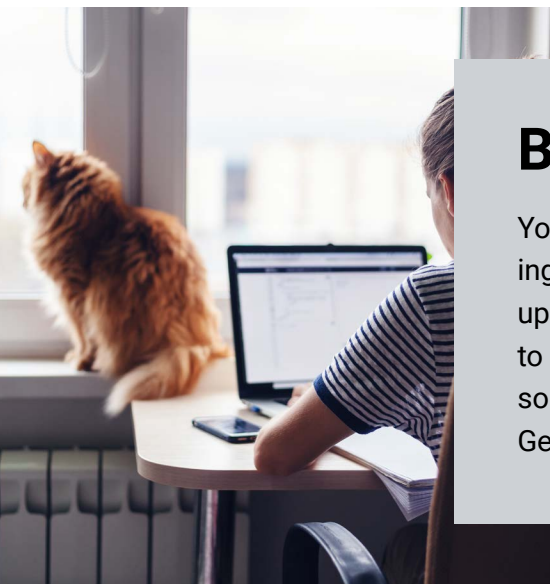
## Providing no-contact delivery or pick-up services

Take a cue from the foodservice industry whose members are adapting by adding or expanding delivery options and providing take-out. Think about offering same-day delivery if you can. Or offer package service where a purchase can be wrapped and ready for your customer to pick up at a designated time (so interaction with others is limited).

As you think about how you can adapt and overcome, think through social distancing and keep your customers safety in mind. And be sure to let them know what measures you're taking to keep them safe

## Moving in-person services and classes online

Are there any services you can move online? If your business offers animal behavior classes, think about launching a special online class or online consultation sessions to help people train their pets at this time.



## Building your brand online

Your Constant Contact account comes with tools that make it easy to start building your brand online. You can create a logo, a full website where you can share updates and information, and even manage your social media. Use these tools to keep your customers and their pets engaged with helpful content. Show them something they can teach their dog. Share a video on how to make a DIY cat toy. Get creative and show your audience what makes your brand special.

# Stay in contact

When you're constantly having to make changes to adapt to an ever-changing situation, it's imperative that you let your customers know what you're doing and when.

Keep your customers aware of any changes in day-to-day operations.

Be sure to include details your customers should know about, like your hours, product availability, and any precautions you're taking regarding the virus.

Consider the following tips to communicate the above information with your customers:



**Update your website.**

**Email your customers.**

**Post to social channels and pin those posts to the top of your feed if possible.**

**Update your details on your Google My Business profile and any other sites where you have a listing.**

**If you have a physical location, think about hanging signage in your windows and around the store.**

It's also a good idea to review any communications you already had scheduled for their appropriateness and relevance based on the current state of affairs.

Remember, your Constant Contact account comes with tools to create a website, sell online, send email (including templates for you to communicate with your contacts about COVID-19 including tips on what to say), post to social media, and more. Need help? See our other resources for [Constant Contact Help and Support](#).

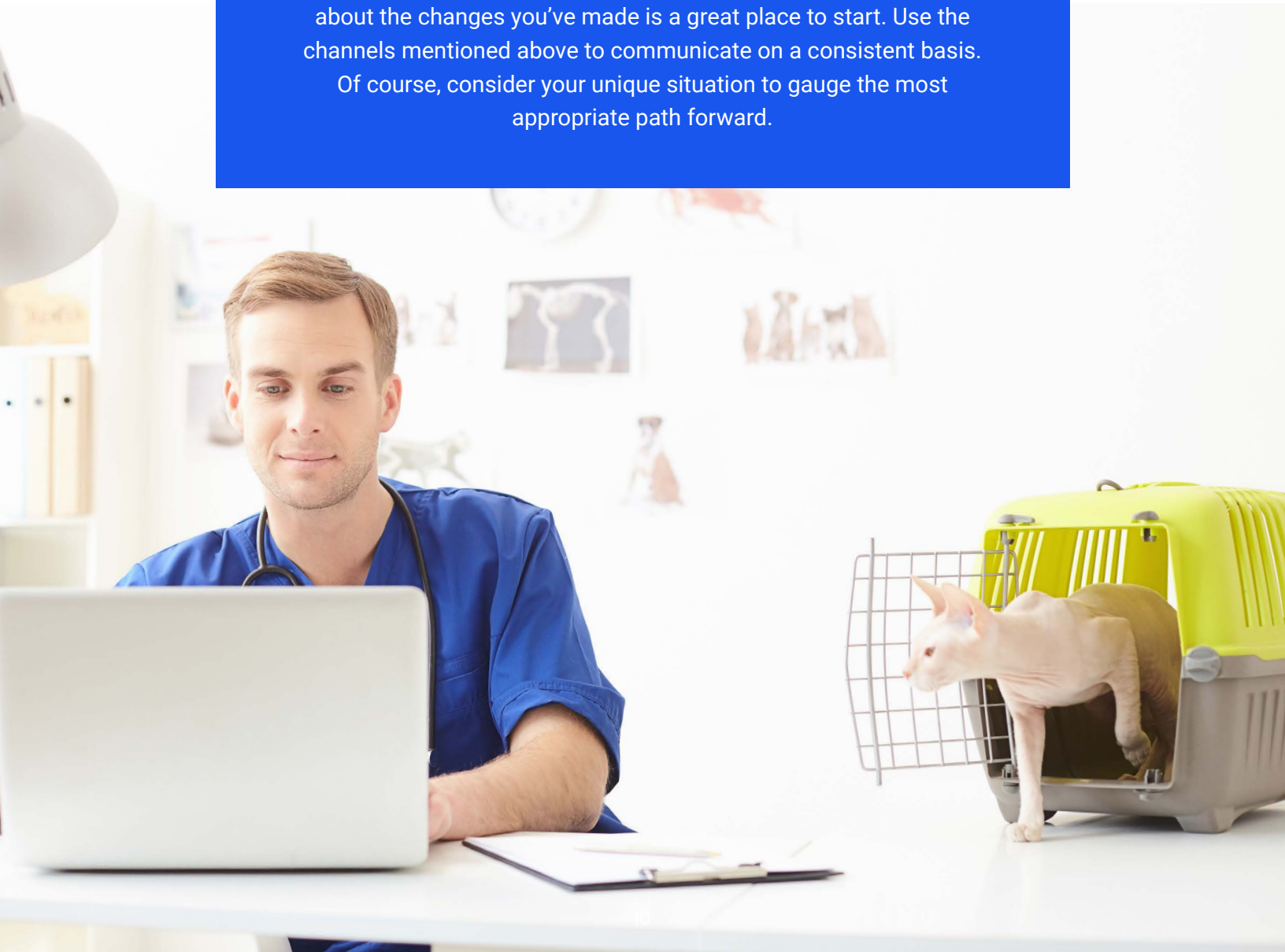




# Marketing during this time

Yes, it's okay to market your business during this time. But you must be sensitive to the current situation and respectful of your audience and the situation they are also going through. Letting people know about the changes you've made is a great place to start. Use the channels mentioned above to communicate on a consistent basis.

Of course, consider your unique situation to gauge the most appropriate path forward.



# Plan for the future

Eventually, you'll need to transition back to business as usual. It's important to plan ahead. So, start making plans for what comes after the emergency.

Review the changes you've made and what you've learned, then think about how you can use that information to move forward.

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## What can stay?

Look for things worth making a permanent part of your business.



- ☐ Did the online store get more traction than you thought it would?
- ☐ Did having reduced hours turn out to be a great thing for you?
- ☐ Did the new content you shared get an enthusiastic response from your customers?

If so, don't stop just because the emergency is over. Keep them going and see if they're a good addition to your business long-term.

## What comes next?



- ☐ Do you need to reach out to your suppliers?
- ☐ If you've been closed, what do you need to do to reopen?
- ☐ How will you recall your staff? Will it be in stages or all at once?

These are trying times with many unknowns. By doing your best to stay safe, reviewing your options, and making a plan, you'll be in a better position to come out on the other side.



# Remember, you are not alone

Our marketing advisors are here to help.

- Connect with other small businesses in the [Community](#)
- See our other resources for [Constant Contact Help and Support](#)

**You've got this. You've got us.**

