

ROADMAP TO RECOVERY

Reopening Your Restaurant

The following guide is meant to help businesses tackle the reopening process while keeping brand, design, and hospitality best practices in mind.

Introduction

2020

Inside This Guide

**F&B OFFERING
MESSAGING
CREATIVE ASSETS
INTERIORS & ENVIRONMENT
MARKETING**

A message from our team

In a few short months, the novel coronavirus has managed to upend our cultural norms and transform our day-to-day lives beyond recognition. While we are only beginning to understand the wide reaching implications of this pandemic, one thing is certain: more change is imminent. As we plan for the future, we'll need to reassess nearly everything about the way we interact, shop, eat, and socialize.

At Brand Bureau, we've been working on ways we think we can better help our clients and our industry.

As a first step, our strategists, brand designers, interior designers, and hospitality experts have worked together on (re)opening considerations in a post-COVID world through the lens of our various disciplines. The following guide is meant to help businesses effectively tackle the reopening process while keeping brand, design, and hospitality best practices in mind.

We developed this guide to help businesses through the reopening process while keeping brand, design, and hospitality best practices in mind. We hope you find it useful as we all navigate the new normal together.

**Hospitably,
Brand Bureau**

F&B Offering

As the impacts of social distancing span into the foreseeable future, your business will need to reevaluate even the most fundamental standard operating procedures in order to be profitable in this new climate. Take a look at what is required of businesses today as well as what is working for others, and ask yourself where you can realistically make some changes.

Six Steps to Success

- ASSESS AND HONE YOUR MENUS
 - DIVERSIFY YOUR OFFERING
 - ASSESS YOUR LABOR MODEL
 - OPTIMIZE YOUR RESERVATION PLATFORM
 - BE REALISTIC ABOUT CITY REQUIREMENTS
 - ENSURE YOUR EMPLOYEES FEEL PRIORITIZED AND SAFE
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Evaluate the efficiencies of existing offerings, SOPs and identify new ways to optimize resources.



Assess and hone your menus

Make it count:

Consider paring down your menu to minimize food costs and labor. Your evaluation criteria could include reviewing pre-COVID and delivery product mix and prioritizing unique dishes that set your restaurant apart.

Optimize for take-out and delivery:

As COVID-19 hit, a majority of restaurants pivoted to delivery out of pure survival mode. Now is the time to review the steps you took and assess all your current delivery tools. Take note of what the competition is doing and look for opportunities to differentiate, ensuring the longevity of your outlet.

Don't forget to consider the whole family. In the past, the standard practice of takeaway has revolved around creating portable portions of existing menu items—with more families eating together at home than ever, consider expanding into family-style portions (e.g. Junzi Kitchen).

Raise the bar:

Bar programs traditionally maintain a high profit margin, so be sure to tailor relevant beverage offerings for the current context and limitations of reduced occupancy requirements. Examine how you might take advantage of delivery, evaluate inventory SOPs, and keep labor low through pre-batching and strategic prep. There is also an opportunity for new experiences, like batching and bottling your cocktails for takeaway (e.g. Dante). So many opportunities to innovate, here...

Batched cocktails

Unique and rare bottles for sale

Auctions

Find ways to diversify your offering

Delivery:

Delivery is here to stay. Assess all the ways this could benefit you financially before selecting a delivery partner—choosing the right partner for your business based on type of platform, financial model, and how this works with your other revenue streams will be key in this adding to the bottom line.

Pantry staples & CSAs:

During this time, many businesses have augmented themselves by offering pantry staples or becoming a pick-up spot for a local CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. Once your restaurant is able to accept guests into its doors again, consider how this model might continue to supplement your business. Not only can this help occupy dead space, but it provides another essential service to the community (e.g. farms, suppliers, neighborhood provisions).

Merchandise:

If your venue has a dedicated following, consider producing limited quantities of merchandise as another way to keep your guests connected. This is also a proactive way to get your brand name out into the public and on your supporters' backs for the world to see. (e.g. t-shirts, prints, house-made sauces from Rezdôra).

Gift cards:

One of the main ways to attract customers right now and increase revenue is highlighting gift cards as a way to support the restaurant. Incentivize the guests with special deals such as, "Spend \$100, get \$25" or "Buy a gift card for later, get a free cocktail to-go now".

Experience packages:

To meet guests' increased desire to dine out while managing decreased occupancy limits, 'special occasion' dinners can be an opportunity to get creative while maximizing for a memorable experience that might command a slightly higher price point (e.g. offering tasting menus).

Assess your labor model to optimize efficiencies

Evaluate staffing:

Reconcile your old labor model with your new one. Which staff members will you realistically be able to bring back? Can they come back, and if not, who do you need to hire? This may require putting a new hiring plan in place, ensure the restaurant is ready the day the mandates are lifted.

Reconsider existing SOPs:

Evaluate the efficiency of existing SOPs and identify new ways to optimize resources. Be sure to fold in safety protocols, new menu offerings, new standards for touching a table, and identify ways to leverage staff during downtimes (e.g. in lieu of rolling napkins, can downtime be spent portioning out batched cocktails for delivery? Can servers operate as hosts, too?) It's also important to eliminate what no longer serves the new way of doing business.



Optimize your reservation platform to respond to the changing landscape

Revisit the platforms:

As our landscape continues to shift and guests become more prone to planning outings in advance, offering reservations will become a must-have. With platforms currently offering financial assistance or slashing their fees, now is the time to join if you haven't had the ability to do so in the past.

Keep apprised on new features:

Many reservation platforms have maintained relevance during this time by introducing new features to assist restaurants. Take advantage of these helpful tools (e.g. Tock coordinating delivery, OpenTable feature for blocking off a range of dates).

Update your profiles:

As people flock to make reservations, ensure your current business profile on sites such as OpenTable, Resy, and Tock accurately reflect your current hours of operation offerings, and any revised reservation processes.

Give the option of specific seating:

Now more than ever, guests may have a strong preference for their seating arrangements within a dining area. Consider the potential for allowing bookings for specific tables or zones within the restaurant.

Revisit your PDR:

Your PDR may provide valuable additional seating. Consider re-evaluating minimums to book and reconsider a new way of activating private events.

Monitor turn times:

Ensure table settings are within 15 minutes of the actual data provided on the reservation platform—this will maximize the number of turns and guests each night. Establish communication protocols that help employees communicate this information to guests.

Be realistic about city requirements and plan accordingly

Keep yourself apprised:

Organizational bodies like the FDA, CDC, and EPA are regularly putting forth new guidance surrounding operational procedures around social distancing and protective equipment, employee health, and sanitizing spaces. Be diligent about keeping updated on the latest news, in order to adapt accordingly.

Be nimble:

Understand that municipal recommendations and regulations will continue to evolve and change will happen frequently. As such, be mindful of over-investing into any one new initiative, and prioritize flexibility.

Connect with fellow restaurateurs:

Community and knowledge is power. Reach out to your local network of restaurants or a regional hospitality coalition to keep each other in the loop and become a resource for one another. (e.g. Bay Area Hospitality Coalition, NYC Hospitality Alliance.)

Ensure your employees feel prioritized and safe

Transparency with operations:

Provide a sense of security and safety with employees by sharing your current operational status; from applying for loans to sharing your plan for the future, communication is key and will in turn create a stronger bond within the business.

Employee resources:

In times like these, it's crucial to spend time ensuring employees feel secure. Consider providing your team with HR and benefit updates, as well as a list of national and local resources that can help guide them during this time.

Messaging

Keeping the lines of communication open with your guests is key. But it's not just what you say, but also how you say it that matters. As everyone looks forward to reconnecting, they'll want to know what you're doing to respond to the changing world around us. Consider how you want to communicate with your audience—this is a great opportunity to reinforce and hone your brand voice.

Three Steps to Success

LET YOUR GUESTS KNOW YOU'RE STILL HERE
ESTABLISH GUIDELINES AROUND YOUR COMMUNICATIONS
FIND A HOME FOR TRANSPARENCY IN YOUR BRAND STORY

Keep it simple, be informative, have fun with it, and show your personality.



Let your guests know you're still here

The most important piece to communicate right now is the status of your restaurant—that you're open, whether or not your hours have changed, adjustments and service model. Keep it simple, be informative, have fun with it, and show your personality.

Establish guidelines around your communications

Maintain sensitivity in your tone:

Evaluate what's most essential to your guests and make that a priority in your messaging—remain cognizant and sensitive to what's happening around the world and within the local context.

Let them know you're listening:

Double down on confirmations and cancellations: With an anticipated shift in consumer behavior towards more thorough planning, you may consider re-assessing your policies surrounding reservations and how to communicate these policies through your brand's voice. This action can help shine a light on guest accountability.

Establish messaging around new protocols: As social distancing requirements will inevitably require more stringent operating procedures, you should consider how you're communicating these to guests and craft clear messaging around why.

Use messaging to your advantage and establish a clear narrative that communicates what steps you are taking to ensure guest and employee safety.

Find a home for transparency in your brand story—it's the new norm

Be vulnerable:

Every person, place, and brand has been affected by Covid-19. You should see this as an opportunity to open up and tell your story; to create connections and further the bond with your community and teams.

It's okay to say you've been struggling

It's okay to ask for help

It's okay to tell people your story

It's okay to explain the role of the guest

Celebrate safety:

Now more than ever, guests will be expecting a new level of sanitation and safety regulations. Use this to your advantage and establish a clear narrative around safety and how you are taking steps to ensure guest and employee safety. This may also be a way to communicate new sanitation products, processes, and new brand partnerships that fall within the category. Outlets for communication might include:

Website

On-site signage

Reservation confirmation email



Acknowledge your community:

Consider crafting language that speaks to the community at-large that makes your operation possible. By shedding light on the ecosystem your business lives within, you'll give your guests a better understanding of why and how your business is changing. That means thinking about your...

Farms and third-party vendors

Bussers

Delivery

Back of House

Front of House

Creative Assets

Your visual identity is a key part of your brand, so staying consistent across platforms, even as you communicate new safety measures, is important. Well designed packaging, signage, and digital assets go a long way in clearly communicating with and appealing to your audience.

Six Steps to Success

BE CONSISTENT

REASSESS DIGITAL ASSETS TO ALIGN WITH CURRENT IDENTITY

LEVERAGE PACKAGING TO BUILD BRAND FAMILIARITY

CONSIDER HOW THE LOOK AND FEEL OF YOUR MENU MAY NEED TO SHIFT

CREATE COMPELLING ON-SITE SIGNAGE

GET CREATIVE! THOUGHTFULLY-BRANDED PRODUCTS HELP GENERATE BUZZ

Well designed signage, packaging, and digital assets go a long way in clearly communicating with and appealing to your audience.

Be consistent

Be sure to utilize your brand's style guidelines, when creating new content and/or assets to distribute across platforms. If you don't have any, now's the perfect time to establish these.

Align your channels:

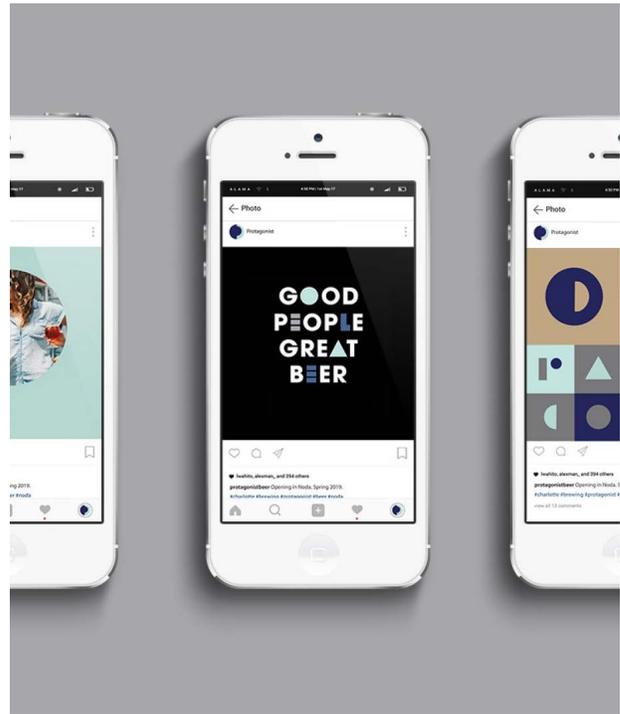
As guests are flooded with communications from all kinds of brands touting all kinds of new offerings, it's important to align each of your different channels and ensure a cohesive identity throughout. Your visual identity should act as a connective thread.

Keep it simple:

The main objective during this time is to get guests through the door and engaging with your brand—ensure your visual touchpoints are not overwhelming and in turn diluting your brand.

Focus your messaging:

From sustainability to cleanliness to delivery to community support, there is an overwhelming amount of content to communicate. Make sure you're doing so purposefully so as not to bombard. Strengthen your visual identity by focusing on one or two subjects to fold into your digital assets and collateral pieces.



Reassess digital assets to align with current identity

Prioritize your website:

As the need for digital assets continues to show its relevance within the current landscape, review your website and its capabilities—make sure it serves your new business model and revenue streams, and update accordingly.

With guests planning their activities more thoroughly, online pricing will become key to maintaining traction. Consider how this might live in order to stand out against competitors.

Helpful reference: Bento Box

Consider your digital presence and content strategy:

Examine your social media accounts and discuss any potential templates or logos that need to be created for recurring posts or themes as consumers continue to interact with brands through the digital landscape.



Leverage packaging to build brand familiarity.

Brand your delivery and to-go assets:

Consider low cost, high-impact ways to personalize packaging, such as using stickers, stamps and/or solid colors on your packaging so they make an impact on passersby en route and also encourage user-generated content upon receipt.

Create significance through takeaways and added details:

Consider including a small keepsake like a postcard for the fridge—be sure to include the website and social media handles.

Include expiration dates and/or reheat instructions:

If applicable to your venue, consider including illustrated recommendations or unique instructions for reheating and storing the product.

Consider how the look and feel of your menu may need to shift.

Transforming formats:

Consider how your menu layout may flex as the menu offering increases and decreases—this may also include delivery-only menus and daily menus.

Consider material:

In light of new sanitation expectations, we may see a shift in how people interact with physical touchpoints. Review current menus and consider the implications if you move away from certain materials or attempt to limit the number of people touching the menus. (e.g. holdable menus shifting to wall signage or laminating menus for easier cleaning)

Create compelling on-site signage.

Adhere to city regulations:

Keep apprised on municipal regulations, as their requirements may change and adapt to the given context.

Integrate signage for key zones to minimize crowding:

Implement appropriate signage and wayfinding for the host stand, delivery pick-up zones, etc.

Implement signage to explain any new operational changes: If applicable, have thoughtful signage to clearly explain the reservation process, how to get on the waitlist, etc.

Pay attention to the building's exterior: To prepare for less people walking through your doors, exterior signage, decal, and touchpoints should be thoughtfully considered.

Get creative!

Thoughtfully branded products help generate buzz.

Interiors & Environment

The built environment is going to see a major change, with distancing and sanitation taking priority. A well thought out floor plan can make these requirements seem less stringent and more hospitable. Get creative, thoughtfully plan for take-out needs and new distancing requirements, and don't be afraid to celebrate sanitation areas.

Five Steps to Success

- PRIORITIZE SAFETY AND SANITATION
 - RE-EVALUATE OS&E TO RESPOND TO THE TIMES
 - REASSESS FLOOR PLANS AND ROOM USAGE
 - IDEATE NEW INTERIOR APPROACHES FOR TAKEAWAY
 - REATE A HOSPITABLE ATMOSPHERE THROUGH INTERIORS AND FF&E
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While overall occupancy will decrease, consider ways to utilize interiors to maintain the atmosphere.



Prioritize safety and sanitation.

Transparency through layout:

Open kitchens have been a popular way to further connect guests to the production of their food. In light of Covid-19, expo kitchens sightlines have additional potential to become a way to showcase kitchen cleanliness to your guests.

Re-evaluate OS&E to respond to the times:

Table OS&E:

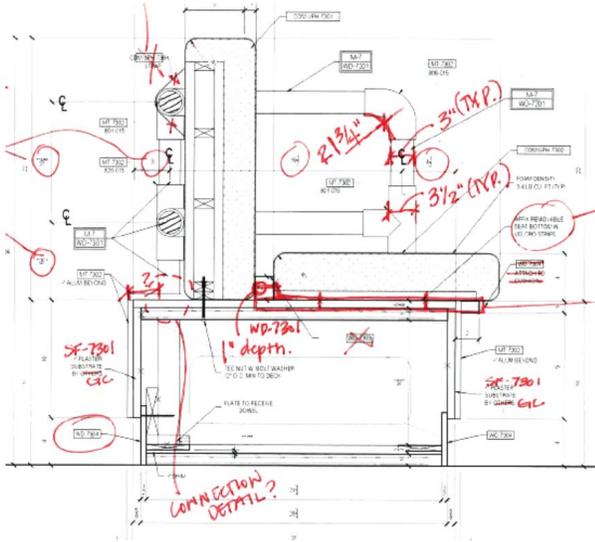
As guests begin paying more attention to cleanliness at the table, your table OS&E should align with their expectations. Consider moving away from communal cutlery caddies or napkin roll-ups, and the possibility of adding hospitable touches like wet naps, etc.

Sanitation OS&E:

As hand sanitizers and soaps become more commonplace, consider how these are being displayed. Depending on your venue, you might like to source brand-aligned containers and products that can be used in lieu of a standard Purell bottle on display.

Evaluate potential for new materials:

When designing your layout and discussing hardware choices, consider fabrics that are cleanable and easy to wipe down, as well as new ways people may want to interact with classic touchpoints (e.g. touching door handles).



Reassess floorplans and room usage:

Spatial regulations:

Adhere to new local and national regulations and review your seating plans. Think about the best way to handle neighboring tables, bar seating, guests adjacency to entrances and bathrooms, as well as spaces people tend to congregate in.

Maximize the outdoors, if applicable:

As guests return to restaurants, maximize your outdoor seating options as they will most likely act as a large draw for dining out. Additionally establish clear areas for dining versus waiting/delivery—consider the use of stanchions as opportunities to properly guide the guest. Spend time ideating outdoor experiential touchpoints and ways to create an on-brand atmosphere outside your four walls.

Leverage new demand for privacy:

PDR alternatives: Ideate how the classic PDR can now flex throughout the day and cater to an increased demand of private dining settings.

Privacy through design: There may be a new demand for more privacy in dining rooms—from curved booths to partitions, it's critical to think about how to make communal dining spaces feel more private for guests.

Consider how to maximize previously communal areas

Delivery areas: Utilize spaces such as bars as staging sections for delivery, which will in turn help market that feature to future guests.

Spaced seating: Create blueprints for new ways seating can be arranged for spaces like communal tables that may house less guests than before.

Ideate new interior approaches for takeaway:

Leverage takeout windows:

Even as doors open and guests are able to dine in, consider if your business model would benefit from a dedicated takeout window. Evaluate your plans and consider the pros and cons of adding one in—discuss how this plays into your kitchen layout, necessary collateral, and if it requires a different POS approach.

New outposts

As outdoor seating is taken into consideration, think about outdoor outposts that are situated by the entrance (Inspiration: Sweetgreen outpost).

Create a hospitable atmosphere through interiors and FF&E:

While overall occupancy will decrease, consider ways to utilize interiors to maintain the atmosphere. Consider how lighting and music affect the space and can further provide an atmospheric experience (e.g. experiment with music volumes in light of decreased occupancies, etc).

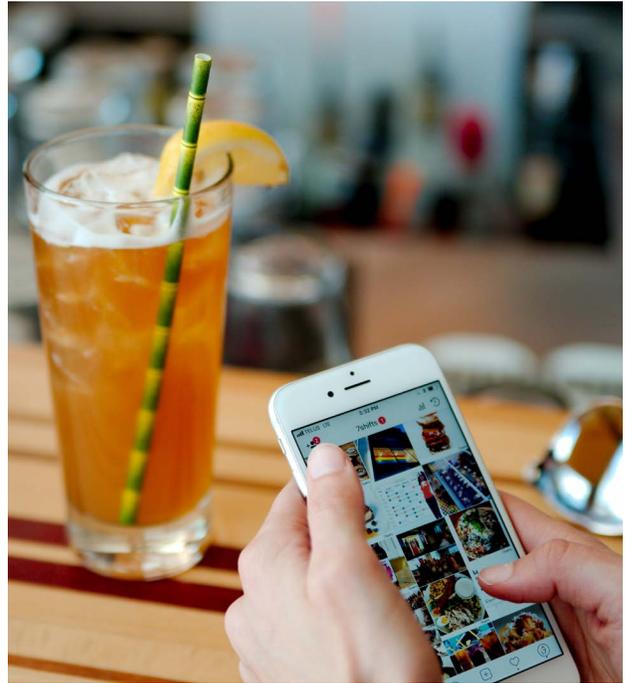
Marketing

You did the work, now let people know about it. Connecting with your audience can go much farther than a takeout container or rearranged floor plan. When people hear your story they'll want to engage with you more. Think about what outlets you can contact or programs you can start to create more connections and get your name out there.

Five Steps to Success

- OPTIMIZE SOCIAL MEDIA
 - FACILITATE GUEST ENGAGEMENT
 - LEVERAGE YOUR EMAIL DATABASE
 - RE-EVALUATE YOUR WEBSITE BASED ON GUESTS & REVENUE STREAMS
 - INNOVATE ON PROGRAMMING IDEAS
-

Innovate on programming ideas as a way to keep connected with your guests.



Optimize social media as an essential communication platform

Pin key information to your Instagram highlights:

Offering guests quick and easy access to essential information is a priority. Take advantage of Instagram's Story Highlights feature to pin key reopening and/or delivery information.

Facilitate guest engagement:

Find ways to meaningfully connect with your guests digitally.

Repost user-generated content when they tag you in their posts/stories.

Share a few of your unique recipes and ask users to share their finished product using specific hashtags.

Consider partnering with select "influencers" to do un-boxing videos with a delivery meal, to candidly showcase your offerings. Rather than the conventional influencer, aim to tap into your community:

Consider reaching out to your top 10 clients to participate. This will make for a very authentic referral and a chance to reach their social circles.

Among more traditional influencers, target hyper-local content creators who are actively involved in your city—their audience will be more likely to frequent local businesses.

Give guests insights into your team culture through behind-the-scenes looks. For example, consider broadcasting your line-up through an Instagram Live, or showcase what pre-service typically looks like through the eyes of various team members.

Keep menus top of mind:

Particularly if your menus are prone to change, make sure you're keeping your online audience apprised by regularly posting your daily/weekly menu on your social platforms (e.g. Kimball House).

Presentation matters:

Social media is a visual medium, so continue to take great care with your presentation and/or showcasing elements of the process. However, take extra care to ensure that any showcase of process demonstrates absolute safety and sanitation.

Leverage your email database

Your email database is a valuable resource, as it's a direct line to a captive audience. In a time when inboxes are inundated, make sure your messaging is thoughtful and impactful.

Re-evaluate your website to meet the needs of your guests and revenue streams

A highly functional homepage:

The homepage should clearly include the following:

- An indication that your venue is open
- Calls-to-action (e.g. **Make a Reservation, Order Delivery**)
- Business hours
- A newsletter sign-up
- Ways to follow (e.g. icons for Instagram, Facebook, etc)

An FAQ page:

In the spirit of empowering your guests with information, consider creating an FAQ page. Questions could include:

- How can I support?
- Do you sell gift cards?
- Is there a fund for employees?
- Is there a relief fund for the industry?
- What safety/hygienic procedures are in place at your venue?
- How do I pick up an order for takeout?

Innovate on programming ideas as a way to keep connected with guests

Activate the space during downtimes:

Consider offering cocktail-making classes or cooking classes on-site during downtimes.

Develop and integrate meal kits:

Consider ways for guests to extend their experience by bringing your hospitality into their own homes, which could look like the following:

Offer meal kit delivery: A delivery option that provides a deconstructed meal that the guest can assemble when they're ready to eat. Consider adding free samples into delivery orders as a hospitable touch and an upsell for future orders.

"Eat out, dine in": Offer a dine-in kit that a guest can take away with them at the end of their meal—a way for them to "dine" with you two nights in a row and a better way to do leftovers.

Pair with expert instruction: Make it an event and offer a virtual class with the chef via Zoom or Instagram Live, to provide instructions on assembly. This could be a great avenue for brand partnerships and bringing on guest chefs, as well.

Partner with delivery platforms on special occasions:

Consider special occasions and holidays that typically drive a high volume of dine-in guests—create delivery-only specials in order to capture any guests who decide to stay in or weren't able to grab a reservation in time.

Co-host a delivery dinner party:

Partner with a couple local restaurants to offer a three-course meal for local delivery, where each venue provides one course. While coordination will be key, this is a great way to support one another and cross-promote your venues to expand your reach.

Press outreach

Pitch your re-opening, interesting programming, and innovative offerings to local and national press outlets in order to gain traction and create additional buzz around your outlet.

INTERESTED IN MORE?

Let's chat.

Schedule a complimentary 30 minute consultation and virtually “meet” with a Strategist, Graphic Designer, and Interior Designer to discuss your reopening plan.

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THE BRAND BUREAU GUIDE