

Digital Apartment Marketing Tips During COVID & Beyond



While the industry was already headed toward digitization, the COVID-19 pandemic is on track to alter apartment marketing strategy for the foreseeable future. With potential and current residents now more accustomed than ever to digital leasing and no-contact consumerism, it's essential that real estate brands assess their current digital presence and resident communication to maintain strong leasing rates into 2021 and beyond.

Enhance Your Digital Visibility for Prospects

With foot traffic reduced and in-person touring limited, you need to make sure your property is as visible online as it is from the curb. Enhancing your SEO (Search Engine Optimization), ramping up digital advertising, and improving your online reputation are important steps to catching the attention of your prospects.

Improve Website SEO

For starters, your website should show up in the first page of results for relevant local housing searches. The better your ranking in these search results, the more likely prospects are to click through and learn more about your property.

There are lots of [ways to improve your apartment website SEO](#), but the short version is that you should be **updating your website** periodically and targeting **local keywords** (e.g. "student apartments in Louisville" or "senior housing near Austin") in on-site text including headers, title tags, meta descriptions, and image alt text. Having a blog on your site is a great way to ensure your site appears actively updated in Google's eyes; it also gives you more opportunities to include those local keywords without keyword stuffing.

Add to Your Digital Ad Mix

Digital advertising has always been powerful, but now it's even more essential that you build awareness, generate traffic, and earn leads online. There are many digital advertising platforms that can help you reach your leasing goals, and a diverse approach is often the most effective.

Build Awareness through Digital Ads

No matter what your current lease rates are, building brand awareness is important to your long-term leasing goals in the market. Awareness tactics increase the likelihood that your property name is familiar when a prospect is ready to start or continue their housing search, making them that much more likely to take a conversion action (e.g. filling out a contact form or starting an application).

There are several platforms that provide especially powerful advertising options for awareness campaigns. **Facebook** and **Instagram** are excellent options, as is **YouTube**. **Geofencing** can also get your name out to people visiting local hotspots (or your competition). **Geotargeted display ads** also improve your visibility to a local audience.

Drive Traffic and Leads through Digital Ads

When website traffic and lead generation are what you're after, **Google Search Ads** and **Facebook Lead Generation** ads are excellent options. Google Search Ads allow you to feature your property alongside organic search results when a user searches for local housing. Facebook Lead Generation ads provide added functionality that can turn new users into warm leads in just a few clicks by allowing them to schedule a tour or fill out a contact form within the ad itself.



Support Your Online Reputation

Although **Google My Business** previously shut off reviews during COVID's early months, this feature is once again live. With prospective residents reading property reviews more than ever, you can bet that a poor online reputation will hurt your chances with prospective residents while a positive or mediocre online reputation can push you through to a prospect's [consideration phase](#).

Not only are GMB reviews an essential part of your online reputation, but GMB's other features also help provide key visibility to your property. Make sure to provide complete contact info on your Google My Business page so prospects can email or call easily if they want to know more. You can also feature **property photos** on your GMB page and feature **available units** in GMB posts so that a prospect knows you have what they're looking for even before they choose whether or not to click the link to your website.

Follow this strategy for other highly visible rating sites and ILSs like **Apartments.com**, **Apartmentratings.com**, and **Yelp** as well.

Share Your COVID Policies

By now, prospects know that they can expect the leasing process to be different due to COVID, but since this can differ from property to property, they may be feeling uncertainty around that factor. Don't leave them wondering what to expect. Make it easier for them to take the next step by giving them clear expectations and transparent safety information.

Your COVID policies—from how you're conducting tours to your leasing office hours to amenity availability—should be visible in several key places including your property **website** and **Google My Business** page. It's also helpful to add messaging on a **confirmation page** once a prospect submits a contact form letting them know how COVID policies will or won't affect next steps.

When it comes to current residents, ensure you are communicating your policies with them by **email** as well (more on that below).



Increase Conversion Rates With a Better Online Experience

With foot traffic reduced and in-person touring limited, you need to make sure your property is as visible online as it is from the curb. Enhancing your SEO (Search Engine Optimization), ramping up digital advertising, and improving your online reputation are important steps to catching the attention of your prospects.

Improve Your Website Experience

Your property website should have solid SEO, [great UX](#), and clear Calls to Action so that it can drive conversions. Consider adding a "Virtual Tour" or "Contact Us" CTA button above the fold on your home page to encourage further action from site visitors. Here are some more tips to improve your website UX.

Must-Haves

These top-priority items can make or break a prospect's experience on your site; not checking these boxes often means losing out on conversions as potential leads opt for properties that inspire more confidence and make their housing search easier.

First and foremost, **floor plan layouts** and high-quality **amenity** presentation are a must. These are your average prospects' immediate questions upon visiting your site: do they have floor plans and amenities that suit my needs?

Your **latest specials** should also be easy to find; a banner on your homepage and/or your floor plans page is a great option. Prospects want to know they're getting the best deal without having to track down additional pricing info like a private detective.

As prospects build interest in your property, make sure they're able to easily take the next step by including a **contact form** on your website. It should never be hard to figure out how to reach you.

On a similar note, you should ensure there is a clear link for **online applications** that allows them to submit and sign an application digitally.

As for current residents, ensure your website also provides a clear and working link to your **resident portal** where they can pay rent online and access any statements you have or will release about COVID-19.

Nice-to-Haves

If you don't already feature **3-D floor plans**, **unit availability**, and **pricing info** on your website, now is a great time to add this functionality. This way a prospect has the tools they need to determine that your property is right for them without the added difficulty of contacting staff and waiting for a response, which can cause prospects to pass you up for a property offering a more convenient buyer experience.

Likewise, **virtual tours** and/or **video walkthroughs** are an especially effective addition to your website right now, bridging the conversion gap for prospects who may not feel comfortable with visiting your property in person.

Finally, a **chatbot** is a great way to make your staff available online to prospects who want the personal touch a leasing office visit would provide but don't want to (or can't) visit your office right now.



Staff Follow-ups and Engagement

Making it easy for prospects to contact you is just half the battle; you also need to ensure they get timely and convenient follow-ups. Consider adding messaging to your contact form that lets prospects know how quickly they can expect a response (and through what medium).

Popular follow-up methods include **phone calls**, **text messages**, and **emails**, but bear in mind that different prospects have different preferences. If a prospect expresses a preference in their message, do your best to honor their request.

Also bear in mind that prospects come to this process with expectations already in mind. Most will expect a response **within 24 hours** and having to wait longer (especially if you don't clearly communicate how long they should expect to wait) will likely discourage them from taking the next step with your property.



Nurture Current Residents for Renewals & Reputation

While much of your attention is bound to go toward attracting prospective residents, it's just as important that you don't neglect your current residents! Showing your residents that you care about their experience and have their best interests at heart, especially now, isn't just a great way to improve your brand reputation, it's also an avenue to more renewals and referrals. In other words, nurturing your current tenants translates into more leases.

Survey Residents To Improve Your Reputation

Asking your residents about their experience serves multiple purposes. First and foremost, it helps you understand their needs and gives you an opportunity to respond to and correct any issues they may currently be having. It also shows you care; simply asking about their experience can be enough to improve their experience.

Additionally, asking about their experience allows you to identify your happiest residents—those who are likely to leave you positive reviews online and share their experiences with their friends and loved ones. Asking happy tenants to spread the word can dramatically improve your online ratings, which is especially important for today's consumers.

Engage Residents to Encourage Renewals & Referrals

Take To Social Media

Virtually everyone is on social media these days, and many use platforms like Facebook and Instagram as convenient ways to stay in touch with all the brands that impact their lives—there's no reason their apartment community shouldn't be one of them.

Engaging with residents on social media helps build a sense of community and allows you to add a personal touch to what may otherwise seem like a faceless business entity that just happens to accept their rent check every month.

Focus on Email Communications

Inspiring confidence in current residents is key right now, and email communications are the best way to reach them while offering a personal and professional touch. So don't just email them about past-due bills or office closures. Put some effort into opening lines of communication between residents and staff. While you're at it, take some time to confirm you have current email addresses for all your tenants. Everyone has questions right now, and the ability to communicate is key.

Showing your residents you care can be as simple as ensuring you're always sending up-to-date information on amenity availability and office hours. Notifying them of upcoming resident appreciation initiatives and inviting them to complete an online survey about their resident satisfaction can also foster positive relationships.

Show Your Appreciation

Giveaways, socially distanced events, and other resident appreciation initiatives go a long way to showing your residents that you value them as part of your community. Virtual bingo is a popular option during the pandemic as are food trucks that allow residents to use a no-contact pick-up option to get a free snack.

Offer Special Incentives

For many, it's a stressful time to be renting a home, and that discomfort may encourage some residents to make a change in their housing. A renewal incentive is a great way to show people there are advantages to staying the course and renting for one more year. It also shows that you appreciate their loyalty and want them in your community.

Referral discounts are also great ways to leverage your positive rapport with your current residents. Turning residents into recruiters can actually be one of the most cost-effective ways to bring in new leases.

[CHECK OUT THE TOUR GUIDE >](#)

