

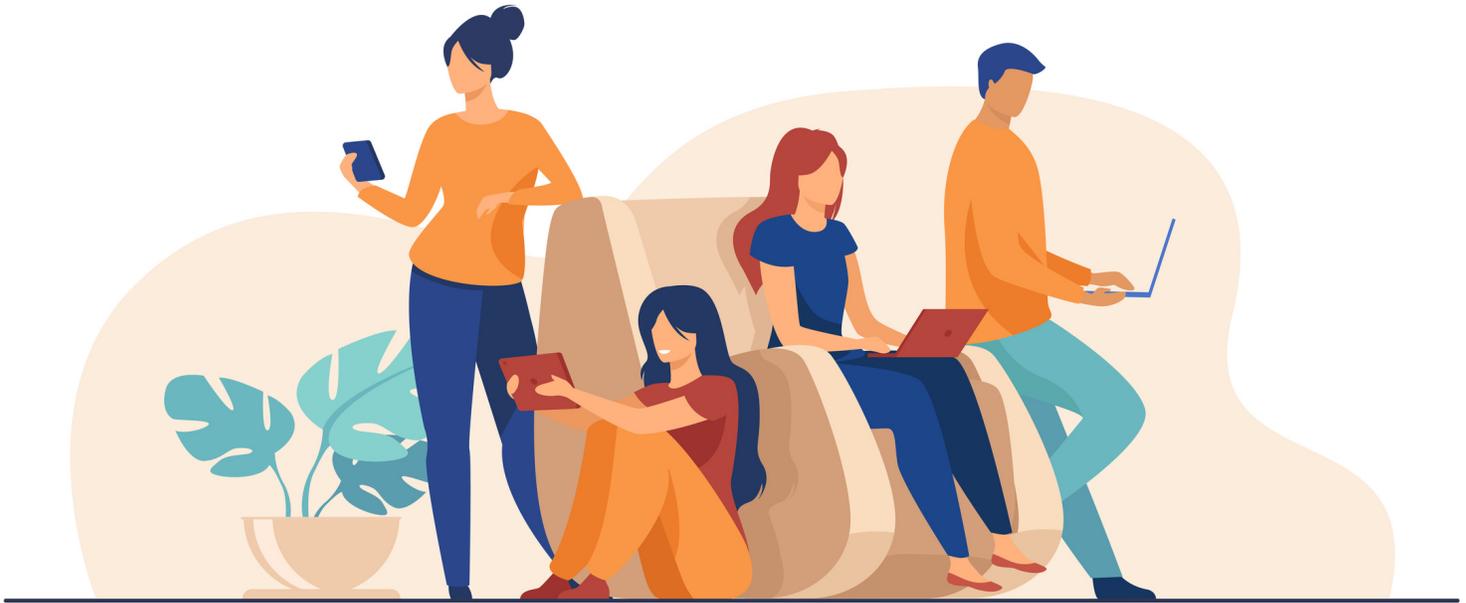


# 7 Ways to Pandemic-Proof Your Service-Based Business

The WISE Women's Business Center (WBC) is an exciting resource for women entrepreneurs at all stages of business development. If you have a business idea, are starting a business, or have an established and growing business, we can help.

For questions, please call 315-443-8634 or email us at [wisecenter@syr.edu](mailto:wisecenter@syr.edu)

**Visit [www.wisecenter.org](http://www.wisecenter.org) for more  
free resources for your small business.**



The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that unexpected disruptions can happen at any moment and have drastic impacts on our small businesses. The good news is that a little bit of planning can go a long way, and there's plenty you can do today to prepare for the inevitable disruptions of the future. Taking action now ultimately makes your business more resilient and more likely to weather future storms.

The following pages will show you how to prepare for future disruptions and set your business up for success. We'll cover how to:

- Get some help from automated technology
- Focus on your loyal customers
- Stay in contact with your customers
- Pivot towards digital products
- Implement financial safeguards
- Stay productive and positive
- Continue networking

Pandemic-Proof your Service-Based Business

# Automate with technology

Automating repetitive tasks and common processes saves you time and money, both of which are at a premium during a crisis. Take time now to think about your most common processes that you could potentially automate.

For example, if you provide graphic design services, you could use a project management tool like Basecamp to collaborate with your team, track progress, consolidate interactions with clients, and send an automated weekly report to their inbox.

New tools do require an upfront investment of time and money, but can save you both down the road if used effectively.



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## Take Action

**Assess your most common processes.** Which ones can be automated? Which tools would help you save time or improve quality?

**Use time-saving templates.** For example, instead of answering the same frequently asked questions on email, you can create a repository of templates or canned responses that you can tweak to personalize.

**Outsource or delegate tasks that are outside of your skillset.** Are there tasks that drain you or take you forever to complete? While you think you are saving money doing tasks yourself, it may actually be more profitable to outsource because it frees you up to focus on building your business.



## Pandemic-Proof your Service-Based Business

# Focus on Loyal Customers

There is a time and place to experiment and attract customers outside of your traditional base. However, in the middle of an economic downturn, you'll want to stay laser-focused on your besties as they'll be most likely to stick around and support you.

Think of ways to connect with those most loyal customers, like special promotions for existing accounts or new services or products they might need. Tailor promotional messages that speak to them and their needs, especially if those needs have changed due to the new circumstances. For example, if the majority of your clients are working mothers, highlight ways to save time.



## Take Action

**Assess your core audience.** How would you describe your most lucrative & loyal customer base? For example, your services may mainly appeal to women - but what kind of women? Think about age, interests, values and their most common pain points.

**Reward faithful customers with perks and benefits.** Express your gratitude for their support in other small ways, like by creating a loyalty program, offering discounts, or early access.

**Provide an incentive** for customers who refer your business to others.

**Define 2-3 targeted marketing campaigns** that you can implement over the course of a year to attract similar customers.



Did you know WISE can help you assess your customer base?

Connect to a counselor at [wisecenter.org/counseling/](https://wisecenter.org/counseling/)

# Stay in continuous contact

Your customers expect timely, clear, and concise communication. Which tools are you currently using to share promotions? How do you keep in touch with customers? Instagram and Facebook have some tools that are easy to use, and communicating through email is always a good idea. Using text messages for appointment reminders or promotions is another way to stay in touch.

Ultimately, when considering how to communicate with your customers, it's important to meet them where they are.



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## Take Action

**Assess where your customers contact you most.** Do you receive questions via email, DM, or directly on your feed? Your communication strategy should be tailored accordingly.

**Select an email service provider to store and keep customer and prospect emails.** You'll want a platform that is intuitive and cost-effective for your business. Having a list of email subscribers is brand gold because these are customers who intentionally connected with your brand and want to hear from you.

**Create or update social media profiles.** Do you have social media profiles that are inactive, out of date, or worse yet, don't exist? Don't stress about being on all the platforms. Even if you have capacity to only manage one, pick one and consistently post and respond to messages promptly.

**Implement text message services.** Along with email, you'll want to explore text-messaging services that can be used for things like appointment reminders, review requests and even promotions. Make sure it's a service that enables users to opt-out if they want to.

## Pandemic-Proof your Service-Based Business

# Offer digital products

No matter what type of service you provide, you have the ability to create a digital product from your know-how. If you're a hairstylist, you could create an online course for other stylists to learn how to master trending coloring techniques. If you're a lawyer, you could create a downloadable PDF to guide entrepreneurs on the dos and don'ts of legal incorporation.

There are so many possibilities in the digital space that have the potential to create a lucrative income stream that can help diversify your business, or just provide value to your customers in a new way.



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## Take Action

**Keep a running list of digital expansion ideas.** Keep a list of ideas that you can think over and revisit as you expand your digital footprint. Could you turn your in-person workshop into a digital course? Could you create a downloadable PDF of the exact framework you run through with clients? What other ways can you give your clients something they need? The more ideas you store, the more opportunities there will be to turn your services into products.

**Make business development a priority.** Business development is the important groundwork you lay for future sales. Digital products will require quite a bit of work to successfully promote and sell. Keep a list of people or companies to connect with. Set appointments in your schedule for time to network, and set a launch date to introduce your digital product.



Need help with your digital pivot?  
We can help with that.  
Connect to a counselor at  
[wisecenter.org/counseling/](https://www.wisecenter.org/counseling/)

Pandemic-Proof your Service-Based Business

# Implement financial strategies



When it comes to setting financial safeguards, you want to be as proactive as possible. The three most important people outside of your small business are your banker, your accountant and your lawyer. Each plays a critical role to ensure your business operates properly and optimally - especially when it comes to setting financial safeguards.

## Take Action

**Consider contracts to help you secure a steady flow of income.** A retainer or subscription service may not be right for every client, but it might make sense for your most loyal or higher-dollar clients. Contact your lawyer to ensure your contracts are updated and mutually beneficial.

**Invest in a financial planner** that can help you manage your cash flow, your savings, your expenses, and more. Hiring an expert in this field can give you more capacity to focus on your business.

**Work with your accountant when applying for local, state or federal financial relief programs.** A great accountant can give you the insight you need to navigate existing programs and help you understand any tax implications.

**Build up your business credit** so you don't miss out on critical financial tools if you need them - like a business loan. Proactively contact your banker to let her know how your business is doing and ask if there are any products you should consider to weather the storm.



# Continue to network



Networking became challenging in 2020 and, at the same time, it became more important than ever to stay connected. While we look forward to networking in person again, there are plenty of ways to make new and valuable connections online. It may feel awkward at first but if you approach it with an open mind, you will find your world opened up to an infinite number of possible connections.

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## Take Action

**Connect with non-profit organizations that align with your values.** You will quickly find opportunities to join boards or give support to a committee. Volunteering your time for a cause is a great way to refine your skills, gain confidence in your voice, and connect with other professionals.

**Attend webinars and online workshops,** then find the speakers and other attendees on social media and ask questions or spark a conversation based on the event. Pro tip: Do your research first, scroll their social feeds so your questions or comments are relevant and show your curiosity about them.

**Seek out ways to upskill.** If you are taking your skills to the next level, you will organically connect with business owners who are also interested in growth.

Keep in mind that networking is not about closing a deal, it is about making connections that develop into relationships.



WISE WBC offers lots of ways  
to stay connected to your community!  
[wisecenter.org/programs](https://www.wisecenter.org/programs)

## Pandemic-Proof your Service-Based Business

# Stay positive, join your community



Growing and adapting your business takes strategy and consistency; it will also require positivity and flexibility. Choosing optimism opens up creative possibilities so you can pivot from a place of inspiration, not desperation.

Of course, not every day will be filled with sunshine and rainbows. It's okay to acknowledge how you truly feel about a situation, but if you find yourself in a negative space - don't just stay there.

Choose joy. Choose gratitude. Choose possibility.

Your business serves more than your bottom line; it serves the local community. Pair tactics with positivity and the possibilities are limitless.

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### Did you know that WISE offers many ways to network with the Central New York community of women business owners?

**Power Hours** Join us on Zoom and Facebook Live on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month to connect with our counselors, brainstorm business concepts, learn from local professionals, and meet other women business owners.

**Building Blocks For Starting a Business** Join us for an introduction to entrepreneurship and starting a business! Learn the basic ideas on determining a need in the marketplace, target marketing, unique selling points, and building your support team.

**Counseling Services** Our counseling team is made up of local, successful, experienced women entrepreneurs who are here to advise you on everything from how to get started, and startup marketing strategies, to accessing capital and managing employees.



## Why work with WISE?

WISE Women's Business Center supports women business owners in Central New York in every stage of their business' journey.

Entrepreneurs working with us get access to one-on-one business counseling, online learning, webinars and other live events, and virtual networking opportunities - all for free. Visit [www.wisecenter.org](http://www.wisecenter.org) to access these resources and learn more about how we can support you.

Our team works hard to bring you content like this that addresses critical business concerns. If you have any feedback on this guide or ideas for other useful content, we want to know! You can reach us at [wisecenter@syr.edu](mailto:wisecenter@syr.edu).

Connect with us online at [www.wisecenter.org](http://www.wisecenter.org)



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