

## Extroverts Adjusting To Masks

Insights from Tom Hershberger, CEO, Cross Financial, 2020

If you are a relationship builder, I'm guessing you have felt the discomfort of trying to communicate with a mask on your face. It impedes feedback and comfort. You lose facial expressions. You experience muffled speech. These are challenges outside our normal approach to relationship building.

Face masks also have effects on customers. Masks might be a visible reinforcement of fears they experience in the midst of this pandemic. Masks might be a reminder that the world around them is changing beyond their control. The nature and intensity of feelings and emotions will be as unique as each customer. That's the bad news.

Plus, if you wear glasses, you can anticipate that your glasses will fog up. Additional bad news for folks like me, but a business boom for the contact lens industry.

### Good News

What about the good news? Masks can help level the playing field. Wearing a mask moves everyone to a place that isn't part of their normal comfort zone. Masks are a visible sign that you, and others, are being impacted by change. Masks convey an understanding that our lives impact others. It is far from a desirable condition, but not an impossible obstacle. Your smile might be under your mask, but your positive attitude, enthusiasm and affirmative comments will come through just fine.

### Attention Relationship Builders

As relationship builders, we need to remember the importance of connecting with our customers and helping them solve short-term financial challenges, examine their financial opportunities, and assist with education about a long-term view

of financial solutions. To accomplish those directives with confidence, we need to begin each day by filling our backpack or briefcase with a heaping dose of empathy. Prepare to be a great listener and plan to find pain points your customers want to eliminate.

If you offered great solutions before the pandemic, you still have access to them today. If you had a strong relationship with your customer in January, that foundation is still a reference point in August. Continue to build on those dynamics. Connecting with your customers today doesn't require a bunch of new products and services. It is probably enough to just understand that wearing a mask, experiencing change, and wanting simple solutions is something you understand. Connecting with your customers and prospects doesn't need to include a complex solution or insightful blog about emerging economic trends. Simply being an empathetic listener might be exactly what your customer needs today.

### Take Action

Some relationship managers are holding back, not wanting to bother their customers during the pandemic. They seem to be waiting for better conditions. Don't wait for a better time to arrive in a month or two. Most customers don't need as much assistance when times are good. They need us most when times are tough and things are uncertain. Get involved.

Plan your day full of contacts and interactions. Make sure your customers know you are available and ready to help. Some lifetime relationships will be won or lost based on how well we care for our customers when they need us most.

It's time for us to put on our masks and start connecting with customers. Not every contact will be in-person, but if you have a chance, make it happen.