

Guidelines for Effective Communication During COVID-19


& Strategies for Emerging from the Crisis

Presenters

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About Communica

- > Communica is a 30-year-old integrated marketing firm specializing in helping clients grow awareness, increase sales and build preference for their brands.
- > Mid-sized firm with a local, national and international brand roster. Named one of North America's Top BtoB Agencies 10 Times.
- > Headquartered in Toledo, with offices in:
 - Toledo and Columbus, Ohio
 - Detroit, Michigan
 - Charlotte, North Carolina

A man in a dark suit and striped tie stands by a large window, looking out at a city skyline. The window is part of a modern office building with a glass facade. The man is standing on a wooden floor, and his reflection is visible in the glass. The background shows a city with various buildings and a clear sky. A bright blue diagonal line runs across the image from the top left to the bottom right, separating the text area from the image.

The COVID-19 crisis is
unprecedented:

We're in Uncharted Waters

We're in Uncharted Waters

An Overview

- > The business environment changed quickly—one day we're at work, the next day we're home learning to work remotely.
 - > We need to embrace technology, social media and other ways to stay connected.

- > None of us have ever experienced a pandemic. The emotional toll has been great—people are out of work, isolated, sick and, in some cases, have lost friends or loved ones. Businesses are closing.
 - > We need to keep this top of mind when we are thinking about communicating with our employees and our customers. If we're tone deaf during this time, our brand will lose respect in the marketplace.

We're in Uncharted Waters

An Overview

- > We will get through this. It is a mistake to not **start planning now for reentry**. You don't want to be digging yourself out of a hole and trying to catch up. If you're back at work in three weeks, four weeks, what would be the first things that you'd do to drive revenue?
- > Keep in mind that, for now, **retention is the new growth!**
- > Now is the time to communicate with your customers and deepen relationships.

**Foundational Crisis
Communications
Best Practices**



Role of Public Relations

Best Practices

Go Back to the Basics

The role of public relations is helping to build long-term trust and confidence between a brand and its audiences. This role is even more critical during a crisis. And, as mentioned earlier, this one is uncharted territory with a lot of unknowns, such as overall time frame and impact.

- In our digital world where information comes fast from myriad channels and through countless sources, **how do you prepare? You start by going back to the basics.**

Consider All of Your Stakeholders

Best Practices

Focus on Your Key Stakeholders

- > **Internal Communications** — your employees are your most important asset. Is your communication with them transparent? Do they know the status of your business? Are you honest about the possibilities— might there be furloughs on the horizon? Can the business weather this crisis?
- > **External Communications** — what are you saying to your partners, vendors, customers, the community. **Now is not the time to stop communicating.**

Communications Strategy and Messaging— Keep These Points in Mind

Best Practices

Transparency/Honesty/Empathy

- Hold to the facts and data points, if you have them.
 - Share what you know, but don't pretend to have all of the answers.
 - Be consistent.

Communications Strategy and Messaging— Keep These Points in Mind

Best Practices

Be Human

- Consider the severity of what's happening in the world. Acknowledge that and be empathetic.

“Consumers are holding brands highly accountable, with 71% in agreement that businesses perceived as putting profit over people will lose trust permanently.”

Source: MarketingDive

Communications Strategy and Messaging— Keep These Points in Mind

Best Practices

Be Human

> Edelman Research: *Trust Barometer Special Report: Brand Trust and the Coronavirus Pandemic*

- 57% of respondents reported wanting brands to stop all humorous or light-hearted marketing and advertising.
- 90% of respondents want brands to put their best efforts into safeguarding the health and financial security of employees and suppliers during the pandemic — even if it means taking on “substantial” losses in the near term.

Communications Strategy and Messaging— Keep These Points in Mind

Best Practices

Be Human

> **Edelman Research:** *Trust Barometer Special Report: Brand Trust and the Coronavirus Pandemic*

- 84% of consumers want brands to give tips on coping with the pandemic
 - There's been an uptick in promotions and free apps centered on health and wellness, meditation and stress relief.
- Nearly 90% of respondents would also appreciate brands that offer free or lower-priced products to health care workers, high-risk individuals and those whose jobs have been impacted by the pandemic.

Communications Strategy and Messaging— Keep These Points in Mind

Best Practices

Other Strategies

- > Practice active listening
 - Social Media—get engaged
 - Monitoring social media channels – your own channels, trusted industry sources, competitors, etc.
 - Other means of listening to customers and the marketplace
 - Monitor Google Analytics and other data sources
 - Look to trusted trade publications, blogs, organizations
 - Consider customer surveys
- > Be responsive
 - > Consumers expect brands to respond to queries and comments
 - > Social media **is** customer service

**Build and Retain
Trust in Your Brand**



Build Trust in Your Brand

Credibility is the foundation upon which we build trust, and trust is vital to your building your brand

“83% of consumers refuse to do business with brands they do not trust. To build trust, brands must focus on exhibiting transparency, warmth, honesty, and reliability.”

Source: *Gartner Daily Insights*

Setting The Right Tone

Build Trust In Your Brand

Appropriate communications style during COVID-19

> Show Empathy

- It's ok to show your humanity
- Use this time to build connections and deepen relationships
- Tap into the collective spirit of helping each other

Setting The Right Tone

Build Trust In Your Brand

Appropriate communications style during COVID-19

> Be Authentic

- If you have something helpful to share or offer during this time, speak up, but. . .
 - Focus on informing, not promoting. People will remember brands that were engaged and community oriented during this time
 - You can do damage to your brand by coming across as tone deaf or too opportunistic

Setting The Right Tone

Build Trust In Your Brand

Appropriate communications style during COVID-19

> Be Authentic

- > Focus instead on how you can authentically leverage your expertise, resources or manpower to give back to your community.
 - Jupmode — *Here for Good* program
 - Deets BBQ — *Grubs for Scrubs*
 - Unilever—pledged more than \$100 million in cleaning products for charities and almost \$550 million in cash-flow relief for their suppliers

Setting The Right Tone

Build Trust In Your Brand

Look at how successful brands are shifting their marketing/advertising

- > They acknowledge the situation first
- > Talk about how they are keeping their employees safe
- > Talk about what they are doing for their customers at this time
 - Payment protection programs from the automakers
 - Uber is telling consumers, not to Uber
 - > “Stay home for everyone who can’t. Thank you for not riding.”
- > Fiat Chrysler- social campaign
 - > “Stay home, stay healthy.” Jeep, “When this is over, the trails will be waiting.”

Evaluate and Engage Across Your Communications Channels

Build Trust In Your Brand

Internal Communications

- Engaging workers remotely
 - Daily touchpoints- engages employees, provides a bit of structure and normalcy
 - Leverage different methods:
 - Consider video calls: Zoom/Google Meet
 - Social media: Engaging employees to take an active role in creating and sharing content
 - Internal email and/or newsletters

Evaluate and Engage Across Your Communications Channels

Build Trust In Your Brand

External Communications

- Evaluate each touchpoint and pay special attention to any pre-scheduled messaging
 - Website
 - Your website is more important than ever
 - The shift to more e-commerce purchasing is changing the way people shop even more dramatically than before. This can include messaging about how your company is trying to make shopping safer and more convenient

Evaluate and Engage Across Your Communications Channels

Build Trust In Your Brand

External Communications: Focus on building connections with your content

- > Newsletters
- > Digital and/or offline advertising
 - Google AdWords
- > Email Marketing
 - Consider a Funnel Management program
 - Mailchimp is a great resource for reaching your target audiences.

Evaluate and Engage Across Your Communications Channels

Build Trust In Your Brand

External Communications

> Social Media Channels

- Social media, both organic and paid is a great way to stay present on a budget
 - Social media advertising allows for very precise targeting with current interest matched with current behaviors and demographics. Messaging can be changed almost in real time
- Presents an opportunity to create a new kind of relationship with customers and other stakeholders
- Can give an inside look at your team and inside your business—remember authenticity and relationship building are key
- Allows for active listening
 - Offers levels of insight that you will need to make better decisions for what is next

**Trends We
Are Seeing**



Trends

- > Humanizing business communication
 - The melding of business acumen and personal life in a new WFH culture
 - Again, a focus on building deeper relationships
- > Empathy first
 - Making an impact
 - Keeping it local —more focus on local news and community information
- > Digital
 - Content development: Creating new, repurposing past and sharing important content.
 - > Blogs
 - > Email marketing
 - > Video
 - > Social media

What Could Re-Entry Look Like



Re-Entry

> Research, Listen and Plan

- What trusted resources are you listening to?
 - Industry, general business, consumer insights
 - Local, state, national and global officials

> Prepare

- Evaluate internal tools, process, roles and external engagement and deliverables
- What new/updated tools or skillsets, if any, will you need upon reentry? How can you use this time to get ready?
- Develop a plan with your team

> Implement

- Carry out the approved plan

Open Q&A Session



Thank You!

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