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## Going to market more efficiently and effectively post-confinement

**CURRENTLY,** pitching anything not directly related to the pandemic is an exercise in futility. However, communication and PR agencies can provide value to clients in other ways. For example, retailers and restaurateurs around the world are feeling the effects of COVID-19 and being forced to adapt. In times of crisis, when anxiety is at an all-time high, customer service and clear communication are essential.

The vast majority of businesses do not have the luxury of a communications and advisory firm. However, it is all the more important now for companies to figure out what this new business-as-usual means, which will look different today, three weeks from now, and beyond. It is critically important to have a planning framework that will help businesses make better and faster decisions during this unique time. It is a sensitive time to communicate with customers, but it is more

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important than ever to get it right and to be timely.

As sectors of commerce remain shut down, and

businesses or organizations limit hours, or initiate visitor and crowd control policies, either by choice

or government decree, communication is important in getting the word out, through earned media, social media, and other digital channels. Most companies have had, at one point or another, to work on a well-worded letter of explanation to their clients. Every business has its own target market and its own decisions and measures and, as such, such letters cannot be one-size-fits-all.

For example, with the cancellation of events, some companies are facing the prospect of doling out massive refunds or other fallout that may need mitigating, and this is where PR comes into play. Messages like “we’re all in this together and are working to minimize disruptions” can go a long way towards satisfying customers and minimizing reputational damage. Whatever the message, it is important to remind clients that their interests remain a priority but, at the same time, communicate hope.

Trying times demand new ways of operating, and now



is the time for marketers and communicators to rely on research, insights and optimization to fuel a strong post-pandemic science backed marketing and communication strategy. We have developed five guiding principles and a communications framework to help companies thoughtfully plan a strategic approach to navigating the journey ahead.

**• Identify how your customer journey may change**

Businesses will move through the different communication phases as the crisis slowly evolves into a new business-as-usual, and the customer journeys need to be revisited at each phase to ensure that the business will meet consumer needs, pain points, and expectations. As an example, for a bank, this may mean delivering on the servicing needs of customers who are new to digital banking during an extended period of personal financial uncertainty, managing the demand for new credit applications, and the potential risk of default or churn. The new business-as-usual will be defined by customers’ acceptance of new situations and their confidence levels post-Covid-19.

**• Run a marketing mix modelling post-Covid-19**

Media consumption has changed and is not expected to revert fully back to how it was pre-Covid-19. An optimisation model will allow companies to spend diligently, discover the channels that produce the most impact so they can allocate their investments properly. Consider channel usage – social, TV and radio increasingly consumed by audiences and likely to remain high for few weeks post-confinement and Out Of Home being almost completely dropped until consumer confidence indicators pick up.

**• Understand your end clients’ point of view**

The pandemic may have permanently or temporarily changed how your customers see your business and you do not know how much of your old playbook can still be used to grow your business. It is important to understand how perception of brands has changed, how their purchasing mood has changed and to gather insights that can help to formulate a post-pandemic strategy. Keep your ear to the ground on your industry

**• Improve your industry and competitor insights**

It is important to understand what competitors are up to and how the industry is expected to change, possibly forever. Marketers or communicators that do not monitor their industry and competitors in multiple channels are likely doing their entire organization a disservice, at best.

**• Develop post-pandemic messaging, content and creative testing**

Informed insights like

their behalf to come up with the right strategies and tactics that will be needed for the coming months. Having a strong communication strategy in place is more important now than it ever has been. Making sure that the right story is being told to the right audience at the right time has never been as vital to brands as it is now. Most organizations will not need to completely overhaul policies and processes, but they likely need to identify any gaps that need to be addressed for processes that are certain to be disrupted. Most importantly,



**“HAVING A STRONG COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN PLACE IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN IT EVER HAS BEEN”**

and invest the time and effort to develop valuable consumer insights from observed behaviour. Again, every industry will have to tackle different challenges and opportunities, but learning about new customer segments in a matter of days or weeks will be critical.

customer surveys, messages and content may need to be altered to meet how customers now think about different industries, brands or products.

Communication is extremely important in these dire times, and brands must work very closely with those who are communicating on

the plan and any revisions made, the activation process, and the steps to successful implementations should be communicated from a trusted source, swiftly and securely.

Customers and prospects who were once leaders in their sectors may lose market share to more resilient businesses – new business targeting should be adapted in the next couple of weeks. A post-pandemic world may be the same, or it may be different. The brands that invest in research, insights and optimization today will be the ones that accelerate the fastest in a post-pandemic world.