

# The COVID-19 Business Challenge: What is an appropriate brand presence in these unprecedented times?

One of the biggest pieces of advice we can offer businesses right now is to...

**keep your brand light burning bright.**

There is a temptation to drop marketing activity like a hot potato at a time like this as other pressures take over. A unnecessary cost that is easy to cut. Now more than ever, you need to maintain visibility, and focus on engaging your audience with relevant high quality content. Lose your audience now and it will be a million times harder to claw back your brand positioning and visibility.



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This thinking is backed up by data from BrandZ which shows that after the 2008/09 financial crash, **stronger brands recovered up to nine times faster** in value than others. "Brand health becomes vulnerable when companies stop investing," says Kantar Insights global head of media, Jane Ostler. "If they do this for longer than six months it destroys both short and long-term health."

Not only that, a recent survey of more than 35,000 consumers globally by Kantar found that just 8% thought brands should stop advertising during the Covid-19 outbreak. However, there is a clear expectation that companies should play their part, with.

**78% of  
consumers  
believing  
brands should  
help them  
in their daily  
lives.**

But where should businesses be directing their attentions? As people travel less and work from home more, mobile and social opportunities increase. Research by Global Web Index found that we are seeing a huge increase in people checking social media across all age demographics; 27% among Gen Z, 30% among Millennials, 29% among Gen X and 15% among Boomers. For that reason, traditional marketing forms are taking a big hit as brands move their investment over to social media.

But success can only be realised on social media with personalised, contextualised, and powerful content marketing. But what is content marketing I hear you say? What does this term even mean?

Well, in short, it's a type of digital marketing. It's a framework for brands to develop an on-going relationship with their audience by providing content that is non-promotional, relevant and provides value at every touchpoint whether it's by email, website, or social media.

It's the kind of activity that can be cost effective, not overtly promotional and allows brands to become storytellers and provide important information. In short – exactly the right kind of content to be placing on your social media feed at a time like this.

**As we've already identified, right now, your audience and prospects are looking for content that will entertain, inspire, educate, and inform them.**

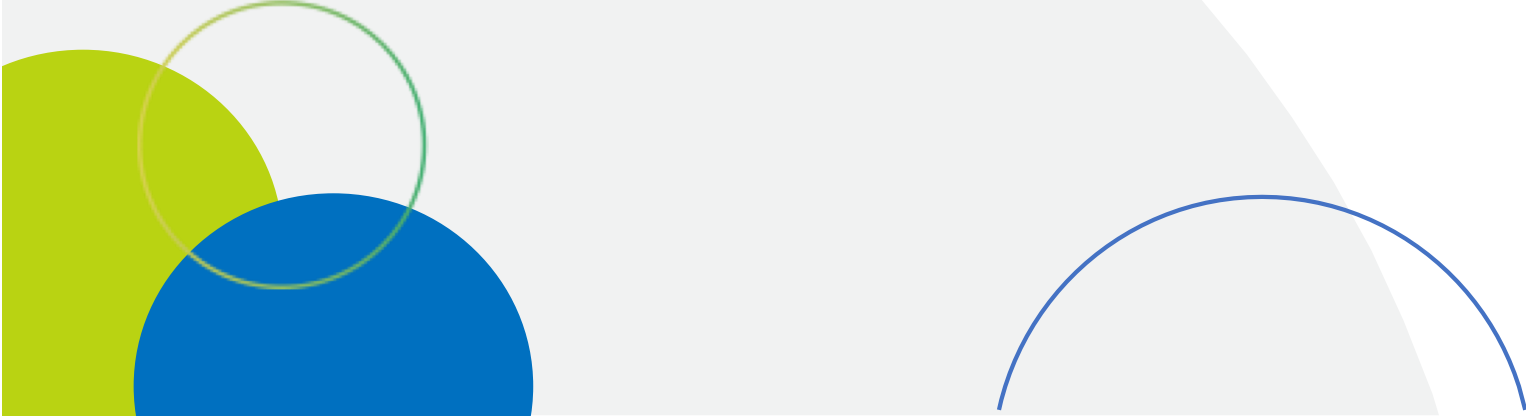
Those businesses who understand this and choose to proactively adapt to the pressure and changes brought to their door by this pandemic are those that are seen as genuinely caring and equally committed to the triple bottom line of **profit, people and planet**. These businesses will emerge from this pandemic even stronger.

However, creating content during a crisis can be a difficult balancing act. On the one hand, failing to acknowledge the current situation can feel arrogant and on the other without a delicate touch, your content and copy can come off as opportunistic or insensitive.

So how do you find your own content marketing sweet spot? Well it's somewhere in the intersection of these three key areas of your business:

1. Your businesses **field of competence**, what your company does best – its unique know-how;
2. Your own **brand identity** – your voice, values and unique brand DNA that stands you apart from others;
3. Critically, the **dynamic needs of your community**. Placing yourself in the mind of your audience on a daily basis and responding to their changing needs.

But what does this theory mean in practical terms for you and your business? Well, to help you strike the right chord during this tricky time, we've compiled some useful advice, tactics and do's and don'ts to help you and your team stay on the straight and narrow and critically create content that feels authentic, compassionate and most importantly, helpful to your audience:

- **Be Responsive.** Given the COVID-19 situation is changing every day you need to allocate time on a daily basis to sit down with those managing your online content to ensure alignment to what's going on in the world and the changing needs of your community.
  - **Build Your Community.** Ensure you are connected with all your clients across all social channels and actively like, share and comment on their activity to show your support. This will also ensure your brand remains front of mind as we come out of this crisis later down the line.
  - **Be Considerate.** Remember this is not a sales opportunity: Don't offer Coronavirus specials, and don't push to get in the news by giving away free toilet paper or make shift masks. NB Now is not the time for edginess. If you're at all worried about that line between appropriate and inappropriate – the chances are you've already crossed it.
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- **Keep To Your Field Of Expertise.** Don't use social media to increase impressions with insights about the situation unless you really have helpful information that makes a difference, and you are a credible source for the topic at hand.
- **Act As You Speak.** Actions will speak louder than words. If you as a business can offer something for free, give important information about safety, have something concrete that can clarify, inform or serve – then share it!
- **Evolve.** In a world where all are working virtually adapt how you communicate with your audience. Strong content might include daily or weekly video blogs with your latest news and updates, a move toward webinars, online tutorials, sharing presentations, quizzes and polls. Subscription-based at-home training is experiencing explosive user growth. If you have an opportunity to offer this kind of content – do it.
- **Empathise.** Mental Health and keeping healthy are understandably hot topics receiving great engagement right now. How can you play a part in this and share your story?
- **Be Relevant.** Targeted campaigns that still provide relevant product information or increase brand awareness should still continue
- **Be Engaging.** Research has found that during short periods of isolation, participatory topics and activities such as games, voting and questionnaires are currently receiving a lot more attention and are being shared further across online networks.
- **Be Dynamic.** Provide a healthy distraction: Stressful times are not prime for promoting sales. It is, however, a great time to tell stories about your brand, your employees, your community causes, your vision. Take this time to be uplifting, again, where appropriate.
- **NB** Don't make light of the situation: There is nothing funny from any angle so remain sensitive and stay real. Any attempt at humour and sarcasm isn't out, but it does need to be heavily scrutinised.

Above all else right now, hold your nerve.

**This tough time will pass and we will be in a situation where things start to recover. In the meantime, keep a view on the longer term as well as the short-term and if you need a sounding board on this subject or any other – we are here to help.**

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