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ENGAGING MARKETING MINDS

MAY/JUNE 2020

WEATHERING

GUIDING
YOUR BRAND
THROUGH
CRISIS

THE STORM

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YOU MATTER MOST

“

If one is continually surviving the worst that life can bring, one eventually ceases to be controlled by a fear of what life can bring.”

— **JAMES BALDWIN**,
American novelist and activist

We have come to understand we have been living in a society of relative prosperity, but in many ways this turns out to be a detriment to our spirit. Right up until the COVID-19 crisis, we felt that we naturally deserved good things and had certain privileges due to us.

When setbacks like this occur, we almost feel as if it is a personal punishment. We cannot help it because we are human. We either blame other people or ourselves. Either way, we lose valuable time and become unnecessarily emotional.

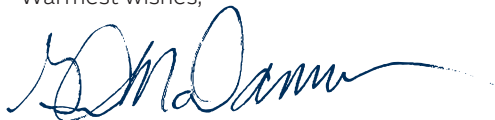
This truly is the time to adopt an attitude that is the opposite of how most people think. When things are going well, we should be most concerned and vigilant so that we are not caught unprepared. And when things turn bad, we should be encouraging and courageous.

Nelson Mandela said, “Courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.” We acknowledge that in times of crisis, we all are afraid. But we also recognize it is a time to be strong and invest in the relationships that are important to us.

In a time of crisis, the best brands and leaders do everything they can to take care of their employees, suppliers and contractors. It demonstrates that people come before profits, and a crisis should put the spotlight on people. In addition, great leaders realize that you must communicate with your customers. And the content must be customer-centric and not self-promoting because it is a time to show that they matter most.

You matter most.

Warmest wishes,



Gina M. Danner, CEO



**Communicate,
but don't push**

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respond to crises**

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WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL, WE SHOULD BE MOST CONCERNED AND VIGILANT SO THAT WE ARE NOT CAUGHT UNPREPARED. AND WHEN THINGS TURN BAD, WE SHOULD BE ENCOURAGING AND COURAGEOUS.

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A decorative graphic consisting of several concentric circles, creating a tunnel-like effect that frames the title text.

AVERSION TO PERSUASION

THE REALITY OF THE MARKETING LANDSCAPE

BY MICHAEL J. PALLERINO

WHILE CONDUCTING a research study years ago with two colleagues, Thales Teixeira used infrared eye-tracking scanner technology to determine exactly what people were looking at when they watched video ads. As part of the study, they also used a system that analyzed facial expressions to reveal what the viewers were feeling. The technologies were not only designed to isolate the elements that kept people engaged, but what made them stop.

What they found was astonishing. The very moment a brand logo appeared on the screen, the viewers changed the channel, regardless of whether they had an affinity for the brand or not. When Teixeira pressed the viewers on why, they could not explain why they changed the channel. What Teixeira and his colleagues realized was that if you put a big, flashy, front and center brand logo on the screen, it was bye, bye ad. Teixeira dubbed their behavior as an "Aversion to Persuasion," eventually continuing to study the psychological phenomenon as a Lumry Family Associate Professor at Harvard Business School.



In Teixeira's quest for the "Holy Grail" of digital marketing—a viral-type ad that large numbers of people want to share with family and friends, and on and on—what consumers tolerate has its limits, i.e., they want to be entertained more than they want to be sold to. This is the kind of chase Teixeira lives for. As the co-founder of Decoupling.co, a digital disruption and transformation consulting firm, he consults, advises and educates executives on what makes today's buyers and brands tick.

"Understanding where your target customer is during his/her customer decision journey (CDJ) can help determine where you need to focus your resources," Teixeira says.

If you need to raise awareness, your message should focus on entertaining people to grab their attention. But if your target audience is further along the decision journey, at the evaluation stage, for example, your message must focus on providing relevant information. The ad is still important because it allows the brand to connect with the right kinds of people in the market. But marketers must support the ad's implicit or explicit promise by building out a marketing infrastructure that supports the customer through the subsequent phases of the decision journey.

"Changes in attention habits require a more surgical strategy in thinking about the role of advertising and making sure a brand is placing the most appropriate ads in the context of the whole decision journey," Teixeira says. 



SELL, BUT DON'T REALLY SELL

WHAT IS BECOMING more apparent is that intently forcing your brand into a consumer's mindset is a strategy best laid to rest. The key is to find ways to "unsell" your customers.

In today's crowded marketplace, those kinds of techniques are as follows: People believe other people and friends. They trust humans and not companies. People believe in experiencing a product versus being swayed by communication, meaning that superior products and sampling have taken off. And people "self-sell" by discovering, researching and hearing from friends via search and social media.

"People are increasingly skeptical and don't trust institutions or firms," says Rishad Tobaccowala, a senior advisor at Publicis Groupe, an advertising and communications firm with 80,000 employees worldwide. "Because of the web and social media, they have become highly aware of how they can be manipulated."

The "aversion to persuasion" mindset is the next bastion for marketers to understand. While nobody has ever enjoyed being sold to, today's consumers can fast forward past the sales pitches in myriad ways, leaving brands to continually revise the way they pitch their wares.

"Search, social, and seeing and hearing from other people," Tobaccowala says. "You will live and die by the quality of your brand or experience. Invest in building a superior product or process, as this is the best way to get word of mouth. Make sure that in addition to your traditional media, you spend a lot of time optimizing search and social media marketing. Both of these are aligned with discovery and self-marketing—people finding and discovering products and services online."

One of the solutions that Teixeira recommends is to build an emotional roller coaster. For example, he says

viewers are most likely to continue watching a video ad if they experience emotional ups and downs. This fits with psychological research findings about human adaptability.

"When we come into a warm home on a cold winter day, or when we receive a pay raise, we experience pleasure, but the feeling is transitory; the novelty soon wears off," he says. "So advertisers need to briefly terminate viewers' feelings of joy or surprise and then quickly restore them, creating an emotional roller coaster—much the way a movie generates suspense by alternating tension and relief."

Another strategy involves building engagement slowly and deliberately. Teixeira says that while there is a lot of talk at companies about quickly increasing engagement rather than thinking in terms of building that relationship incrementally, people are not willing to watch or consume a 30-second ad if they have no connection with the brand.

"You have to have a coffee with someone before you ask them over to dinner," he says. "The same applies for brands. It is important to think in terms of developing multiple short interactions to create a 'ladder of engagement' with a customer."

Perhaps the biggest strategy for helping to alleviate the aversion to persuasion is to bolster your brand's personal

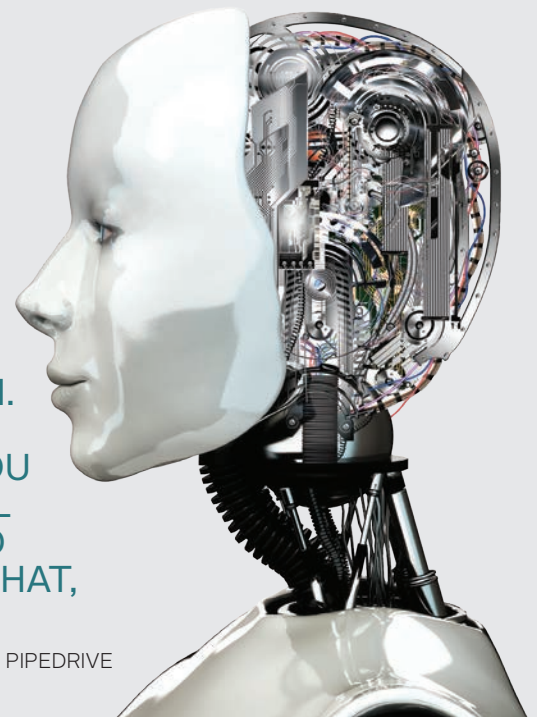
engagement, i.e., build buzz in the most authentic human-centric manner. Raul Perdigão, global head of Inside Sales at Pipedrive, says the takeaway is that marketers, salespeople—everyone, really—are just trying to make connections with other people.

"It is about making a true, human connection," Perdigão says. "In a world of bots and automation, knowing you can connect with a real person at the other end of the phone, Zoom or chat, is imperative. That's why we work directly with marketing to ensure our emails are personalized and incorporate small photos or videos of the salespeople or support team at the other end. It helps show that there's a real person there who is responsible for helping you succeed."

This type of persuasion is the kind that will help drive brands forward in a world of constant noise. It is a step worth considering.

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— RAUL PERDIGÃO, GLOBAL HEAD, INSIDE SALES, PIPEDRIVE





WEATHERING THE STORM

GUIDING YOUR BRAND THROUGH CRISIS

T

hese are confusing and worrisome times. Just imagine a small business—any business for that matter—facing cancelled orders, pressing payroll and an idle workforce. The COVID-19 crisis has forced us to review every facet of how we live our lives.

Jonathan Bernstein admits that he has never seen anything quite like this. For nearly the past 30 years, his crisis management firm, Bernstein Crisis Management, has come across myriad instances where highly effective

strategies were needed to calm and manage a situation.

“In my 35 years of experience, 95% of the crises we have responded to have been, in the wisdom of hindsight, completely preventable,” says Bernstein, chairman and founder.

Bernstein says one of the key takeaways from this challenge is that business leaders must have crises management strategies in place to manage both their operations and





reputations when things go awry. The plan must include the activation of triage on the business in the moment and proactive brand strategies to maintain connection.

When a crisis like COVID-19 hits, the key is to remain calm in the storm. It is a strategy that Bo Bothe says could serve every leader well. “Having gone through three major economic shocks in our business, we’ve gotten to the point where we look at everything right away: debt, client health, AR, AP, ratios, etc.,” says Bothe, CEO of Brand Extract. “Then we look at overhead and staff.”

The key is to use your strategy and vision to make calls after you review what is happening. What can you cut that will not impact your core competency? What do you have to hang on to at all costs? What is a waste or problem that needs to be corrected? What have you been kicking down the road?

“The intent isn’t to overreact, but to find a way to do more than survive in a crisis,” Bothe says.

SETTING YOUR BEARINGS

Once you get your bearings, the next step should always be a personal recommitment to all of the people who have been affected—the team who will be navigating the crisis, and those within the business and community.

Doing the right thing is critical and the crisis will put your values to the test. “You have to be honest with everyone about what’s going on,” Bothe says. “That doesn’t mean you scare them, but you have to put enough out there so that they all understand the gravity of the situation. Being honest makes it easier on the leadership team that may have

to do some harsh things, and the employees and customers who can at least prepare.”

In his book, “What You Do Is Who You Are,” Ben Horowitz says that leadership has to come from the front. In crazy times, leadership has to make good decisions and mirror the way you want your team to act. Panic begets panic, calm begets calm, and passive begets passive.

“You need to provide hope and belief, but you can’t provide false hope or belief,” Bothe says. “You can benefit from making hard decisions quickly here as well. Being clear about your intentions, honest and open about what you’re doing, humble about how you do it, and swift to act makes things so much better in the long run.”

If you want to know the best way to act in a crisis, Zdenek Kratky offers this advice: Communicate and develop your contingency plans up front, and plan for the worst case scenarios so you may always understand how you might fail—then you are more likely to succeed.

“As you drill down, you must manage cash flow, commit to listening to your employees, connect with customers as much as possible, and benchmark your plan with other industries,” says Kratky, VP of Marketing for Sigura Water.

While it may seem difficult to communicate in unpredictable situations, building trust still



“YOU NEED TO DO THINGS THAT ARE APPROPRIATE FOR THE TIME. YOU HAVE TO STICK TO WHAT YOU’VE ALWAYS BEEN, THAT’S HARD IN TIMES LIKE THESE.”

— ZDENEK KRATKY,
VP, Marketing, Sigura Water



matters. Even amid the shared pain and anxiety we have about the future, Kratky believes that focusing on trust is always the best path forward. “Building trust shows commitment, care and empathy.”

THE COMMUNICATION FACTOR

Above all else, communication is the key component. Are you reaching out to employees on a one-on-one basis to alleviate their concerns? Are you addressing their situations? Are they aware of the resources available to them? Are you communicating openly and successfully with your “decision influencers”?

In such trying and unprecedented times, some of the best actions rest in the character of leaders. “You need to make well-thought-out, quick decisions with compassion and honesty,” Bothe says. “There are things you should share with your team and other things you shouldn’t. Honesty and direct communication doesn’t mean saying everything.”

Having seen the toll that crises can take on people and brands, Bothe says that the reality of the situation is that the path out is yours to chart. “Sometimes, that’s something small, and sometimes it’s a wholesale change. But your people are looking to you to lead, and in times like this, quick, honest and clear decisions are what they are looking for.”

All crisis management-related plans moving forward should have a very clear set of procedures outlined for each member of your crisis management team, both in operations and communications. There is no set playbook. Procedures must be customized to each client’s needs.

The metrics and crisis team you employ to guide your business must be executed quickly. Sigura Water has formed a task force that includes leaders from all businesses and functions. It has also created an extended work group of internal experts. “Core task forces meet daily and the extended group meets twice per week,” Kratky says.

“We are keeping safety as the first priority, and then financial and other considerations can be managed once safety of employees is ensured.”

THE LIGHT AHEAD

Consumers—your customers—look to a brand for information. They want to trust that you will be there to support them during good and bad times. Bothe says that being proactive, transparent and honest is a significant driver of loyalty. “People will forgive and help those who treat them with integrity and purvey honest information, not selling gimmicks during times of crisis management.”


Consistency matters—it matters in the moment and it matters in the future. Brands must be consistent with their mission, vision and values. Kratky stresses that panic is not an option. Your audience is looking to you for confidence. But you cannot act like nothing is wrong either.

“You need to do things that are appropriate for the time,” Kratky says. “For example, you

“THE INTENT ISN’T TO OVERREACT, BUT TO FIND A WAY TO DO MORE THAN SURVIVE IN A CRISIS.”

— BO BOTHE,
CEO, BRAND EXTRACT

might be worried about new business, but in this current environment, someone calling to sign you up for a new service or sell you something that isn’t essential seems a little tone-deaf. You have to stick to what you’ve always been, that’s hard in times like these.”

The crisis is real. It has been painful. But through thoughtful planning, sincere communication and a commitment to branding, we can start to see the light in the distance. Real opportunity is born from moments of crisis. 

TACTICS



HOMEWARD BOUND MANAGING A REMOTE TEAM

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has pushed employees out of the office and into their homes. Teams are now working remotely, many for the first time. The isolation and lack of structure can seem daunting. Here is the good news: Remote work can be just as, if not more, productive than everyday office life. You just have to stay on top of everything. Here are some tips from

public relations firm Poston Communications on how to work and manage a team remotely:

SET EXPECTATIONS

Let your team know what is expected of them from the start to avoid confusion. Hold a virtual meeting so that all questions can be answered and everyone is on the same page. Set your expectations for the methods

of communications, company policies and where employees should turn to with questions.

CHECK-IN VIRTUALLY

Humans are social creatures. Now that you are working remotely, you cannot just swing by your coworker's office for a quick chat. Texting and emails will make up a large portion of your communications. And while that is great, do not underestimate the value of face-to-face interaction. Arrange daily video chats to

stay connected with your team.

BE FLEXIBLE

As more states enact quarantines, employees not only have to deal with their schedules changing, but also the schedules of their kids and spouses. Some may have to share a computer with multiple people in their home. Understand the need for flexibility in this time so that your employees can find a schedule that works for them.

SAY SOMETHING

6 WAYS BRANDS CAN RESPOND TO CRISES

The coronavirus. The market crash. Global tensions. There is a lot to process right now. How your brand responds is critical. When a crisis hits, people are vulnerable and uncertain. That is why you must step up to provide value. Branding Strategy Insider offers six ways you can respond in a crisis:

NO. 1 OPTIMISM

It is easy to turn your head when life throws you a curve. But you can refrain from adding to the rampant negativity. Be a beacon of positivity and lift up your customers. Having a good attitude is critical.

NO. 2 HUMOR

Take your customers' minds off of the situation with some good, clean humor. Find the fun in life and give your customers a little escape from reality.

NO. 3 ECONOMIC

If your customers do not support what you do, how do they expect the industry to thrive? Make the case that your brand is helping them by stimulating the industry, and that their support is crucial to its success.

NO. 4 NOSTALGIA

It is easy to think of a better time before the downturn. Soothe your customers with nostalgia. Remind them that you have been with them through the good and the bad, and that things will get better.

NO. 5 EMPOWERMENT

Now more than ever, your customers need to feel in control. Give them options so that they have the power to choose: payment plans, different sizes, different experiences, etc. Increase your value by increasing their power.

NO. 6 VALUE & PRICE

In an economic downturn, people are making all sorts of cuts. Your brand needs to provide value, and it needs to come at a reduced price. Offer savings and discounts to motivate customers. Provide value packs that offer more for less.



BUILDING BRIDGES

BEST TOOLS FOR STAYING CONNECTED

Working remotely for the first time can leave teams feeling disconnected. Luckily, modern technology can bridge those gaps in communication. There are myriad tools out there. CO by the US Chamber of Commerce takes a look:

MESSAGING

Communication is essential, and often challenging, when working remotely. Use chat software such as Slack, Vox and Microsoft Teams to stay connected. Use these to discuss projects, brainstorm ideas and keep all communications in one place.

VIDEO CHAT

The best way to replicate face-to-face meetings out of the office is video conferencing. Seeing coworkers in real time can help curb feelings of isolation

and keep everyone updated at the same time. Most software includes recording, live chat, and screen-sharing to further enhance your communications. Check out Zoom, Google Hangouts and Skype.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

If you are not already using project management software to keep track of everything, now is the time to start. Monitor tasks, assign projects, schedule deadlines and track progress in one place. Look to Basecamp,

Trello, Asana, Airtable, and Monday.com to see what works best for you and your team.

CLOUD STORAGE

Not having access to your company's internal servers is another hurdle facing remote teams. Take advantage of cloud storage applications so that everyone has access to all documents, spreadsheets, presentations, etc. Popular apps include Dropbox and Google Drive.

PRODUCTIVITY & TIME TRACKERS

Staying on task with all the distractions of home life is difficult—especially with other quarantined individuals in the house. Take charge of staying productive with apps like Toggl, Todist and focus booster. They help track time and progress, and keep you accountable.



Construct. Send. Repeat.

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF BOOSTING YOUR EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

YOU'VE GOT MAIL. Yes, while a bit more sophisticated, email marketing continues to be one of the most important tools in the marketing playbook. It is easy to use and delivers great ROI. But you still have to get your message in front of your intended audience. To help bring up those ROI numbers, SparkPost (sparkpost.com) offers the do's and don'ts for boosting and maintaining deliverability:

Don't ambush your mailing lists during peak times

- ▶ Do gradually increase your email outreach ahead of major seasons

Don't send the same email to everyone on your lists

- ▶ Do practice audience segmentation

Don't go rogue

- ▶ Do keep with what is working

Don't keep emailing to subscribers who are not engaged

- ▶ Do practice list hygiene

Don't forget about the competition

- ▶ Do craft compelling subject lines

Q&A

ON THE RECORD WITH LINDA FISHER THORNTON

LEADERSHIP AUTHOR SHARES INSIGHTS
ON PROTECTING ETHICAL BRANDS



Why is it important for every brand to have a strong, consistent image today?

While we would like to think that we are in control of our brand image, it is really shaped by our ethical choices. It takes only seconds for the news to travel about an unfortunate customer service incident or a manager mistreating an employee. Front line employees define the brand for customers moment to moment, and leaders define the daily employee experience for them. Leadership must be consistent and positive so that employees are prepared to create positive experiences for their customers.

Why does that matter more than ever?

If we want to generate positive coverage, we need to make our employees aware of how we want them to treat constituents. Since they drive customer experience, they will need supportive managers and readily available information and resources. Clear instructions for how to handle tricky situations will help them manage challenging interactions.

What are some of the ways brands can build and foster stronger images?

They can activate and amplify their values. Research shows that many organizations have values, but they do not actively follow them day to day. Start to close the gap by making values a clear priority and opening an ongoing dialogue about how to follow them. Thinking through difficult scenarios together helps people learn how to handle them in real time. Establishing clear expectations is a must, before problems arise. Many leaders avoid these conversations. It is easier to talk about brand image and ethical choices preventively than it is to clean up afterward.

What are some leadership buzzwords we should know?

It is an exciting and challenging time to be in

When world-renowned thought leader Stephen M.R. Covey provides a forward for your leadership book, you are in good company. That

is exactly where Linda Fisher Thornton is today. Covey called her book, "7 Lenses: Learning the Principles and Practices of Ethical Leadership," a clear and detailed roadmap for ethical brand leadership. And no wonder. Thornton, founder and CEO of Leading in Context, has worked across myriad industries consulting global Fortune 500 companies, non-profits and associations, leading a rallying cry for how to protect brand reputation in ever-changing times. We sat down with her to get her insights on the art of the play.

leadership. Here are five important trends I predict we will hear more about:

Sensemaking

At a high level, brands are worried about making sense out of data, complexity and change in the midst of economic and regulatory uncertainty.

Preparing brand leaders to handle uncertainty

Brands are concerned about how to attract and keep top leadership talent and how to prepare their leaders at all levels for an uncertain future.

Ethical culture building

Brands will be learning how to build ethically grounded cultures that provide the setting for employee success and a positive brand reputation.

Complex information processing

Higher level cognitive skills will be needed, including critical thinking, decision-making and complex information processing.

Sound mindsets and meaningful work

Brands will focus on developing sound mindsets, helping people find meaning in their work and generating a positive social

impact. Empathy, collaboration and trust will likely be hot topics.

Tell us a little about the theory behind your "7 Lenses" philosophy.

Ethical leaders make good decisions to protect the reputation of their brands. That requires multidimensional thinking. In my book, I share several years of research synthesized into a clear model for "seeing" our ethical impact on multiple constituents through seven ethical lenses.

The first two lenses, Profit and Law, focus on monetary and legal impact. The third, Character, adds moral grounding and ethical awareness. The fourth and fifth, People and Communities, help us see our impact on individuals, teams and the broader communities we serve. The sixth and seventh, Planet and the Greater Good, address leaving things better than we found them.

We only see the full impact of our choices when we look through all seven lenses at once. It takes clear insight and practice to learn how to balance the ethical variables that the 7 Lenses represent. The effort is worthwhile. Seeing ethical issues clearly gives you confidence to make sound choices that protect profitability, ethics and brand reputation.

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