3 Lessons Learned From Marketing Through Coronavirus so Far

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I have personally drawn much strength, solidarity and inspiration from the local businesses in my community. So intrinsically interwoven with the fabric of the people they serve, they can’t help but be empathetic to new norms and emerging needs, flexing their models, operations and communications on a dime.

Big business has had some impressive acts, too, often much harder to pull off at scale. We see them supporting their employees with new policies, protecting their workers on the frontlines and pivoting mass messaging and media strategies for a new normal.

As we navigate how to behave, it can be overwhelming. But perhaps we should channel timeless Maya Angelou and her advice: “At the end of the day, people won’t remember what you said or did. They will remember how you made them feel.”

Here are a few of the things I have loved, not loved and learned over the past two weeks that can be lessons to us all:

Even if your message is still valid, tone matters

We have seen this lesson on tone most significantly in retail. Under significant business pressure, promotions and offers flood our inboxes. But a shift in how they are delivered is the difference between unexpected delight and distaste.

Consider dialing down typical retail urgency in your offer. Don’t use clichés like “friends and family” verbiage that conjures new and negative meaning. Don’t overplay the work

from home and quarantine scenarios, which are a tough adjustment for all and should be treated with sensitivity.

Be sensitive when communicating with consumers

Brands whose mission naturally intersects with our current condition have an easier road to authentic connection. But all can play their role. Sensitivity has manifested in so many ways: from large QSRs shifting messaging on a dime to drive-thru and delivery to health and wellness brands offering tips and tools for staying physically and mentally well to the hospitality industry wishing us well, reminding us of better times and letting us know we shall see one another again.

The common thread is consumer, not conversion, first. Re-

assess all planned CRM, paid and owned content strategy in light of a new consumer reality that is mid-crisis, one that needs help and support. This consumer fragility requires some of us to say nothing at all.

Encourage and empathize even when you don’t know what to do

The pandemic we are confronting has revealed a host of challenges beyond the virus, exposing vulnerability in our supply chains, healthcare systems and governments. Those fighting to keep us safe from these vulnerabilities can only do so much. In a global crisis that is impacting us all and where people are in desperate need of solutions and

solidarity, every brand, celebrity and influencer can do their part. Reinforce the guidance of our experts, set a good example through your own behavior and empathize.

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