Brands With Strong Twitter Personalities Stay the Course During Covid-19

Key insight:

- Brands are finding that the content fans want in the pandemic is the same humor and sarcasm they've come to expect.

The beginning of 2020 saw even more brands express themselves on Twitter, peppering tweets from company accounts with humor and attitude.

Brands like Denny's used clever wordplay and almost seamlessly integrated the restaurant chain's menu items into its content, MoonPie had sharp but down-home, almost folksy humor and the state of New Jersey's official tweets brought the kind of attitude you can only find in, well, New Jersey.

Humor and thoughtful social commentary came from frozen beef brand Steak-umm and the clapback responses from Wendy's are the stuff of legend.

But early 2020 became late February 2020, when the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic became evident, followed by March 2020, when terms like social distancing, self-quarantining and working from home became the norm, along with stories about people losing their jobs and lives as well as the inability to see loved ones who passed on and without being able to say goodbye.

These tragedies posed new challenges for these brands' Twitter accounts and those who run them, and forced them to think

about their responses in the face of this widespread crisis.

Things like: How should the teams behind these accounts respond? Should the shared content take on a more somber tone to reflect the issues of the day? Does humor provide a much-needed respite from reading about confirmed cases and death tolls?

“We realize that these are not normal times. A lot of people are going through some really tough stuff right now,” Dooley Tombras, president of Tombras, the agency behind MoonPie (@MoonPie) on Twitter, told Adweek.

Some brand accounts, like MoonPie and Denny’s (@DennysDiner) took brief hiatuses from tweeting while they navigated how to best approach their feeds.

“There’s no playbook, but when it comes to social media, knowing when to stay silent is just as important as knowing what to say,” said Denny’s chief brand officer and senior vice president of marketing John Dillon. “No question in the initial days of Covid-19, it was important to stay silent. As it continued, we were having continuous discussions around our social strategy. The news cycle was changing so fast, and we wanted to stay agile and responsible.”

Other accounts, like Wendy’s (@Wendys) continued to tweet to “remain authentic with our fans,” said Jimmy Bennett, vp of media and social at the chain. And hitting the pause button was never an option for the state of New Jersey’s official Twitter account, @NJGov, which began live tweeting the state governor’s daily press conferences.

Brands like @steak_umm have embraced tackling the quarantine, and it’s by far the most likely to provide a take on pressing political issues of the day.

Here’s a look at how some of the most outspoken brands on Twitter are navigating Covid-19:

Denny’s

Denny’s took a brief hiatus from Twitter, from March 26 through April 6, before returning to the platform “to bring conversations that occur in a booth to the social media world,” Dillon said.

“Even if that diner booth is now in the living room instead of our restaurant dining rooms, we believe that diner booth still exists—we just need to move with it. And in this new social-distancing world, when our dining rooms are closed, encouraging stay-in-place and social distancing is more important than ever, and we’re proud to play a role here,” he continued.

Denny’s ultimately returned from its Twitter hiatus with a heartfelt statement from CEO John Miller before going back to its fun ways, embracing its role to “feed people’s souls when they could use a smile or a laugh,” Dillon said.

> *Normally, this tweet would be trying to make you laugh. But friends, these are not normal times. So instead, we’re using this stage to share a statement from our CEO regarding COVID-19. Thank you for understanding. Stay safe: https://t.co/6fMZFGDVqp*
>
> *— dennysdiner (@DennysDiner) March 17, 2020*

With video meetings becoming a vital part of the new normal, the restaurant chain provided some fun backgrounds for people to use.

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Pages: 1 2 3

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