



HOW TO ADAPT YOUR PR STRATEGY DURING A CRISIS

by
Agent99



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Introduction

Coronavirus, COVID-19, global pandemic and social distancing are new words and phrases that have become part of our daily conversations.

The escalation of COVID-19 from a small number of isolated cases to a global pandemic has undoubtedly transformed every industry and all facets of our lives at an alarming rate.

For many businesses, this virus has raised a pressing question: What should I do about my PR initiatives? With news being dominated by headlines about the virus, it's proven quite challenging to develop and execute PR plans.

However, there are still things smart companies can do during this time of uncertainty:



1. Listen for changes in customer sentiment and behaviour

Long before the virus, consumer trust in large brands was showing signs of waning. Consumers now align their trust more closely with family, friends and local businesses. The current crisis seems poised to amplify the distrust customers have of brands. However, brands have the opportunity to rise to the occasion by re-establishing trust through customer-centric actions.

It's important to know what customers feel and do, and why, so it's time to listen to what they're thinking and feeling. Being responsive, timely and transparent is vital in order to gain or maintain this level of trust.



Now is the time to support customers and protect customer relationships while staying honest about what you can and cannot deliver at this time. Be careful about taking actions that provide short-term stability (or gain) for your business at the expense of customer trust.



2. Think critically how to tell your story

The coronavirus pandemic has led to heightened concern, and with stock markets dramatically fluctuating, travel at a standstill, retail confidence at an all-time low, and grocery stores struggling to cope with consumers rushing to stock up on goods, there's been plenty of news for reporters to cover.

During this time, it's important to be judicious in how you tell your story—and evaluate whether this is the right time to be telling it at all.

Before you hit “send” on any marketing emails or media pitches that reference COVID-19, think about whether your content is providing actual benefit, or if your content could be misconstrued as profiting from a catastrophe.

If you're uncertain if you're capitalising on someone else's misfortune, you probably are.





3. (Continue to) Be helpful

Providing value by being helpful is a constant principle for marketing and PR professionals. Even amidst this pandemic, your audience needs to be at the forefront of your strategy. But their interests are understandably going to change during this time. Keeping this in mind, ask yourself...

How does COVID-19 affect my audience?

Have my audience's priorities changed?

Does COVID-19 affect my product/service? If so, how can I best communicate that to my audience?

Questions like these can help to keep your audience's pain points top of mind. From here you can see what content and campaigns still apply to your audience — and which need to be put on the back burner until the dust settles.



4. Get creative

At the end of the day, this is uncharted territory for all of us. With so many voices competing to be heard, creativity can set you apart. Is there a unique problem facing your brand or industry? It may be time to brainstorm with your team and start looking for solutions.

Identifying alternative solutions to reach your audience, such as video content, live streaming or creating content downloads (such as this one) are some ways of staying connected and delivering useful and engaging content.



5. Look to the long-term

Building your visibility, thought leadership and reputation requires dedication and perseverance, which is all part of the long game to make it through this pandemic and beyond.

With many businesses fixated on the present, it's important to plan for the future and eventually returning to (the new) normal, whatever that might look like. But in order to make it to the other side, you need to use this time to build that foundation.

In summary

Many businesses have had to adapt during this time, which has seen countless putting upcoming campaigns on hold and creating new content and messaging, in order to remain relevant and most importantly helpful. This is key in not only future-proofing your business but ensuring your audience will still be responsive to your campaigns down the track.



Contact Sharon Zeev Poole, Founder and Agency Director, Agent99

Questions? Comments? If you would like to know more about Agent99 & how we can help you and your business, get in touch today!



sharon@agent99pr.com



0401 811 930



www.agent99pr.com