



# Brands in the face of the COVID-19 crisis

5 Communication Keys  
to Surviving the Pandemic

apple tree  
communications



With the COVID-19 pandemic, the world is facing its greatest challenge in an entire generation. In this context, most companies, like society as a whole, are facing major challenges that may even threaten the survival of the business - challenges in which communication is an essential element.

## Leaders and businesses must not lose sight of these 5 keys:

- 1** Enforcing Purpose and Social Responsibility
- 2** Leading in an Environment That is More VUCA Than Ever
- 3** Effective Internal Communication
- 4** Managing Communication in an Unforeseeable Crisis
- 5** Preparing for an Uncertain Future





# Enforcing Purpose and Social Responsibility

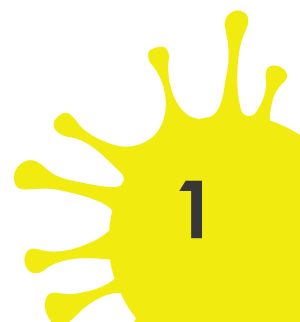
*“Successful companies today aim not only to sell products in the best way possible, not only to understand consumers, but also to make the world a better place”*

It would appear that, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the famous statement by Phillip Kotler is more apt than ever. In recent days, we have seen how some brands have launched highly creative campaigns and have even played with their logos in this regard. These exercises are good for raising awareness about confinement, but beyond this first phase, in which we have all become aware of the need for distancing, they do not contribute much more.

Yet we also see many companies that have used their experience, their logistics or their technology to contribute where most necessary. From textile companies, such as Inditex and Mango, which have made their factories available for making and donating masks and gowns; hotels such as Room Mate, which have given up their space and beds to patients or health care professionals; drinks groups, such as Pernod Ricard and González Byass, which have made their plants available to manufacture hand sanitizer; almost all the telecoms companies, which have increased bandwidth at such a crucial time; and home-delivery food chains such as Telepizza, which are delivering to health care professionals and those most in need.

It is unfair to mention just a few examples because so many have stepped up to the plate over these days, but looking at all these cases, it is easy to say which brands are and will be most relevant.

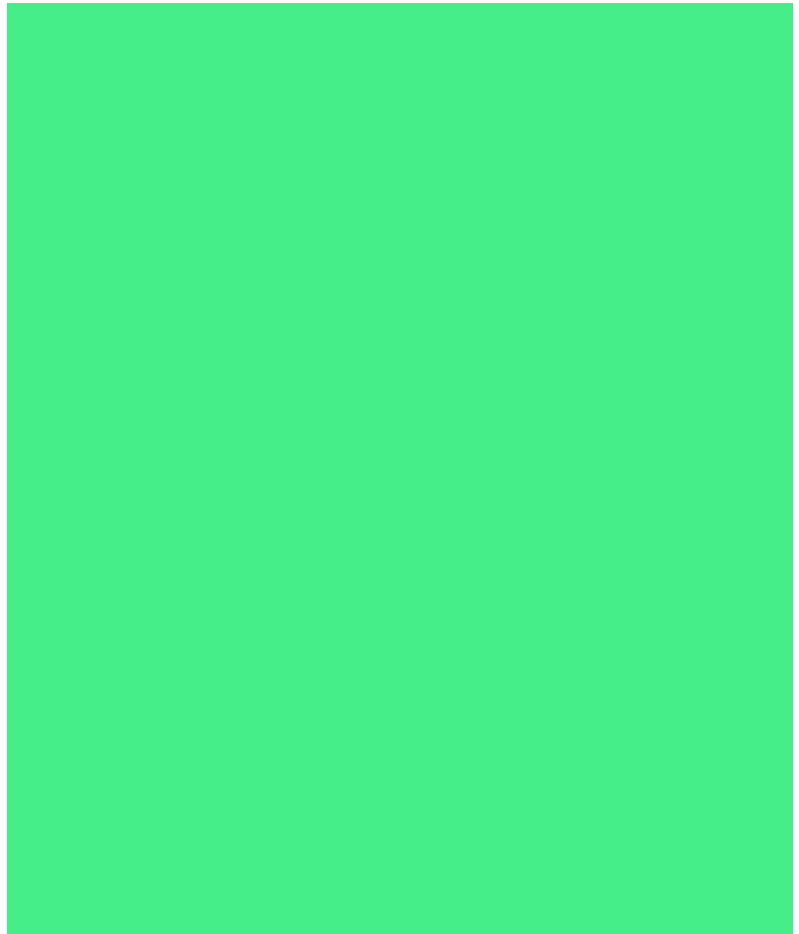
**“It is time to SAY less and DO more”**



# 2 Leading in an Environment That is More VUCA Than Ever

For years, we have been hearing that the big challenge for new directors was to lead organizations in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) environment, and in recent weeks, we have realized that, in truth, we never imagined how volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous it could get.

Now more than ever, we need leaders who, with the necessary caution, are bold, with the necessary drive to make rapid and effective decisions; leaders who are empathetic, to understand the moment and the different situations, fears and concerns that arise at all levels of their organization; leaders who are creative, to be able to identify opportunities in crisis situations; and leaders who are charismatic, because, more than ever, we need captains we can trust to navigate us safely through the crisis.



# Effective Internal **3** Communication

Organizations are nothing without the talent of which they are composed. We know this, and that is why communications and marketing professionals place so much importance on and even evangelize about employer branding, employee engagement, and effective internal communication.

Lockdown measures have changed the organization of most companies overnight, posing a major challenge in terms of communicating with employees and keeping them



motivated and united.

In these times, it is essential not only to facilitate, in technical terms, the work of collaborators of those companies that have had to adapt to new processes such as working from home, but also to maintain vertical and horizontal information flows that transmit confidence in the organization, communicating clearly and effectively what the company is doing and what it will be doing, and making it clear that the commitment of everybody has never been as important as it is now.

In the same way that, as a society, we will only get through this if we work together, as companies, we should see it as an opportunity to strengthen internal engagement at all levels of the organization.



# Managing Communication in an Unforeseeable Crisis

# 4

In crisis communication, we like to emphasize prevention ("the best managed crisis is the one that never happens"), but with the COVID-19 pandemic, we have come up against something so unexpected, because of its novelty, impact and consequences, that it has blown away all prevention plans.

We are, then, facing a situation so uncertain that it is impossible to accurately predict what will happen in the next few days; nevertheless, it is necessary to project out potential scenarios and to try to prepare for them as closely as possible, especially those that may be most dramatic for the organization or that put the viability of the business at risk. We can then define the implications and consequences of each scenario, taking into account all the stakeholders (employees, shareholders, consumers, suppliers, public authorities, etc.) to determine the steps to be taken in each scenario.



With regard to communication in the different situations that may arise, if two of the maxims of crisis management are speed and caution, in the current situation, we need to double the dose of both.

We must organize in the best way to be able to respond as quickly as possible to each new change in the script, but without acting hastily. Spokespeople and those responsible for communicating on any of the different channels (external, internal, public affairs, etc.) must choose their words with care and transmit key messages clearly and effectively (if possible, in two paragraphs or two minutes rather than five) and communicate both good news and bad with transparency. Only in this way will we manage to transmit confidence, thoroughness and determination - key attributes of a good crisis communicator.







# Preparing for an Uncertain Future

A crisis like the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will have geopolitical, economic and social consequences that we have surely never seen before. If the world changed after 9/11 and after the 2008 financial crisis, all signs indicate that the current situation will lead to far more radical changes.

When we come out the other side of this crisis, we will have to adapt to a new normal that will lead to changes in society, in politics, in communication and in the business world.

Given this situation, in terms of brand and institutional communication, we can return to point 1 of this article, as those companies with a clear purpose, that are able to connect beyond the material and to be truly “relevant to people” are the ones with the greatest potential for success in the world that awaits us after the pandemic.

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