



The “New Communications Normal” During and After COVID-19

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In times of crisis, coordinating your communications is essential.

COVID-19 is triggering a sudden global “reality check” unrivalled since 9/11. Markets catering to in-person experiences like restaurants and cafés are shuttered while other businesses supporting food and product delivery, online shopping, and working from home are flourishing. The very nature of ‘work’ is changing at blinding speed. In all, it is reasonable to expect that after the virus passes, there will be a “very new normal” in its wake.

Without question, the pandemic has forced businesses and organizations the world over to re-examine and, in some instances, redefine all parts of their service in order to demonstrate their worth (and relevance). While crisis (sadly) is a fact of life, no two crises are alike and COVID-19 itself has presented a unique set of limitations and challenges that we could not have imagined but only a few weeks ago. To be blunt, the impacts of COVID-19 upon businesses are pretty substantive and require careful navigation.

So what does that mean for your business and your relationship with your clients and stakeholders?

Your Internal Audiences are Key

Counterintuitively, your **Number One** priority is actually to communicate with your internal audiences. It’s easy in the face of crisis to fixate on your external audiences and lose sight of the fact that those closest to you are your best weapons of defence. Identify your internal stakeholders first and foremost and then communicate clear and tight messages that reinforce confidence and understanding. Reassure them that while there will be a chaotic period in the short term, stability will eventually be restored and that this is a period of reinvention and innovation.

Leverage But Don’t Exploit

Remember that there’s a fine line between being available to respond to client needs and being tone deaf to people’s realities (at best) or predatory (at worst). Most non-essential services have been forced to close their doors and the resulting levels of unemployment are unprecedented. Financial stress alone has forced people, including most of your clients, to retreat. Let your clients know you are there but don’t become an annoyance.

Communicate Consistently with Clients but only with Information that Matters

Your clients and stakeholders want to hear from you but make sure that you have something important and relevant to say. Not all of the messages we received last week from organizations



were... well, needed or necessary. Much of it was largely generic and redundant. Nonetheless it reflected the organizations' intrinsic need to "reach out" and acknowledge the massive disruption. Be judicious with your communications. It's important not to succumb to "meme culture" by reformatting and parroting information. This rapidly becomes easily dismissed noise, which is never good for your brand. Before you push *send*, apply a filter that asks the question "does this information REALLY matter to my clients and stakeholders?"

Re-Shape How You Interface

Presume that how you interface is going to be different and likely forever. This is not just a supply chain issue, it is a relationship management issue. We may have entered (forcibly) into the new normal where virtual connection with clients will be a part of our long-term reality. Consider how this will impact you, your client relationships, as well as how you deliver your services and products.

Consider What Your Client Needs

Whatever service or product you offer, put yourself in your client's shoes. While you are considering your interactions, go deeper and consider how your client's interfacing has changed. Don't be afraid to discuss it with them. New and valuable opportunities will likely emerge from those conversations that may have potential for monetizing.

For information on communicating during a crisis, contact the ZGM PR Team.

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