

WHAT DOES THE PANDEMIC CRISIS MEAN FOR BRAND FOUNDATIONS?



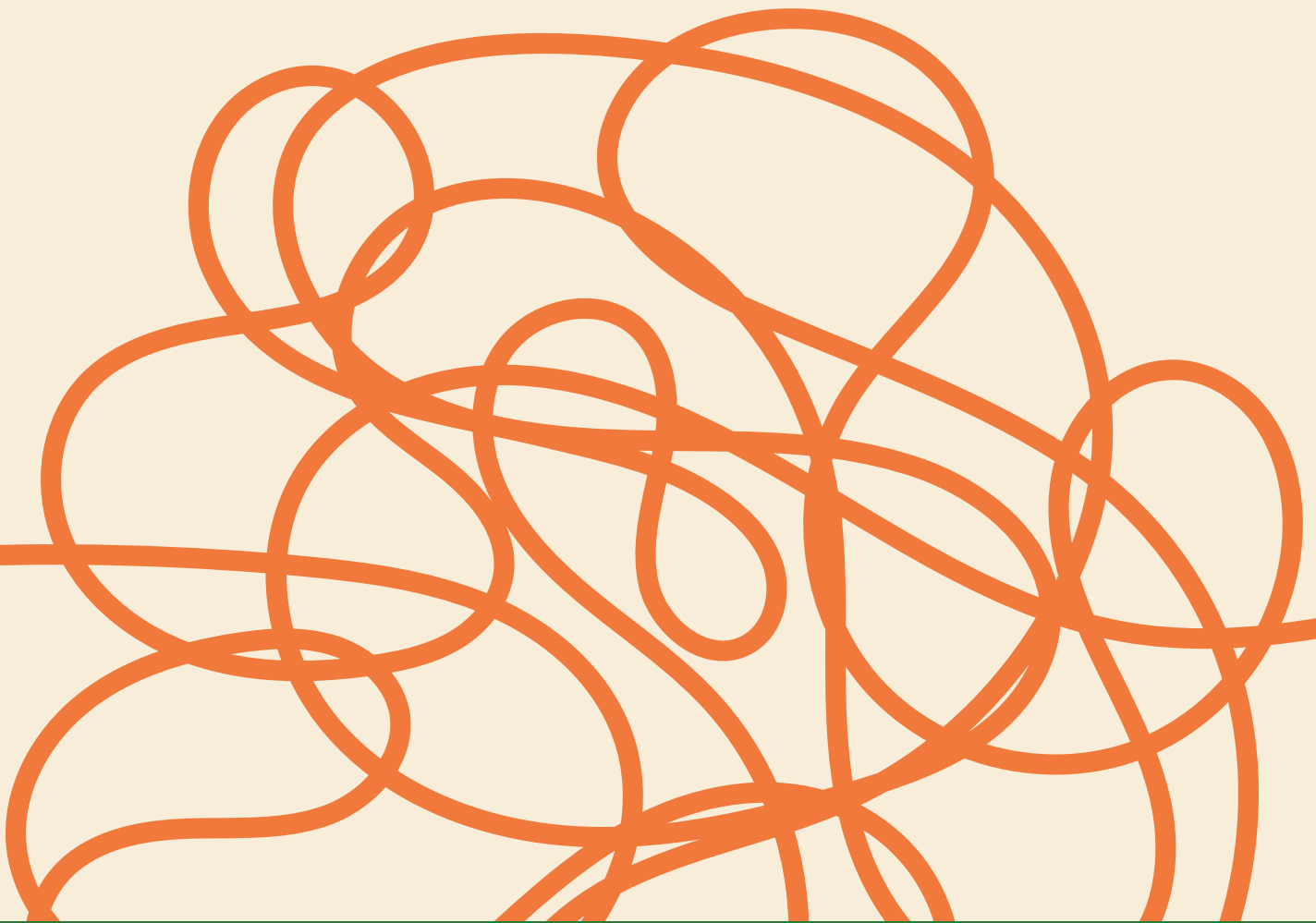
PRESENTED BY

LEAP GROUP

One day, business couldn't be better.

You're churning, burning and can barely keep up with orders. You have more RFPs than you can respond to, and maybe you finally landed that big, breakthrough meeting with a prospective new client. And then, it all comes to a screeching halt.

The coronavirus changed everything instead — our Pearl Harbor, another 9/11. That watershed moment when our world is turned upside down in the blink of an eye.



1

Now What?

DON'T PANIC.

It's easy (almost second nature) to be reactionary and make quick decisions that can ultimately create longterm damage for a brand.

Sometimes, we do nothing. As if a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming truck. We all know how that ends.

It's time for deep breaths, clear thinking and a steady hand. Ask yourself how your brand can adapt to be part of the solution.



Demonstrate you put people over profits to inspire confidence in your employees and customers. Consumers notice when brands are self-serving and opportunistic — and they share their disapproval.

The phrase is becoming pretty threadbare, but truly, we are all in this together. And together (but apart) is the only way we're going to make it through this season. So welcome to the "new normal" (for now)! Have a seat. Grab a drink! And now, let's talk about what's next.

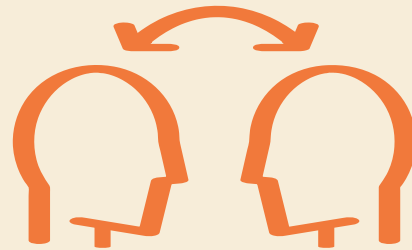
2

Now What?

TALK TO YOUR CONSUMERS

We all seek comfort and normalcy in a time of uncertainty and stress. Like our own consumers, we are emotionally connected to the brands we allow into our lives. They don't necessarily define us, but they do accentuate who we are and provide a level of stability.

Maybe we're looking for a distraction, or we want comfort in knowing that you (the brand) are empathetic to our needs. But customers most assuredly want to know where you stand and how you're helping make a difference.



**THE QUESTION IS, DO YOU KNOW
WHERE YOU STAND?**

3

Now What?

PIVOT WITH PURPOSE.

Something's got to give. And eventually, it will. We can't all hide in our homes until a vaccine is approved. A more nuanced solution is already evolving, and that's good news.

In the meantime, we need to keep moving forward to intelligently jumpstart our economy, but that will involve making changes to meet our customers where they are. It requires us to pivot. So how do we do it wisely and not end up with more problems the coronavirus already dropped in our laps?



SIMPLY PUT, WE HAVE TO PIVOT WITH PURPOSE.

At this point, the term “purpose” should be ringing all kinds of brand-building bells. Remember all that stuff you worked out in your brand strategy workshop a while back? Mission, vision, values, personality, etc.? It all leads to one place: PURPOSE. What is your purpose, cause or belief? Why do you exist? Outside of making a profit for your shareholders, what positive impact are you trying to make? Why do you matter? How are you different than the other brands in your market?

Brands that live their purpose every single day do not struggle determining how to respond during a crisis. It's inherent to who they are and how they run their business. They understand their purpose is more than just a statement in a brand book.

**PURPOSE IS THE GOAL YOU
SET FOR YOURSELF TO MAKE
YOUR CONSUMER'S LIFE (OR
THE WORLD) BETTER.**

If you don't live it, it's time to dust off the brand book, crack it open, and refresh yourself and your entire organization on the purpose of your brand. Because every stakeholder in your organization is desperate to DO something, but they need to do the RIGHT something. And purpose goes a long way toward identifying what that is.

4

Now What?

CHANGE WHAT YOU DO. NOT WHO YOU ARE.

With brand purpose in mind, there are a few things that probably should change during this time. And some things that cannot be changed. To set guardrails that will keep your efforts on track and on brand, it comes down to one simple rule:

CHANGE WHAT YOU DO, NOT WHO YOU ARE. IN OTHER WORDS, ADAPT YOUR TACTICS NOT YOUR STRATEGY.



As you adapt to new realities, at every decision point ask, “Does this fundamentally change the purpose of our brand or does it give us a way to better to deliver on our purpose in meaningful ways?” If the former, think carefully. Perhaps an idea can be a major breakthrough within the lens of brand purpose. If not, move on.

5

Now What?

SAY WHAT YOU SHOULD. AND NOTHING ELSE.

Knowing your brand purpose helps avoid blunders that make you seem unaware and tone deaf, or even greedy and opportunistic at worst.

Purpose empowers you to know where your consumer is coming from, and where you have the biggest opportunity to make their situation better in honest, intuitive ways.

I'm not sure why my neighborhood garage felt the need to let me know we were in this together, but they did. They assured me that they're obsessively washing their hands every hour to "do their part." But perhaps cutting their rates for the next month to help those that have recently lost their jobs would have been a better way to communicate their commitment to community is paramount.



This is a slow-moving natural disaster, and people want to be assured.

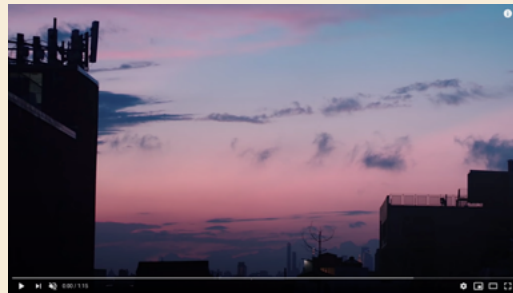
They want to be comforted. They want to know that your brand recognizes their sacrifices, puts them ahead of P&L, and – like their friends and family – is here to help.

TAKE A PAGE OUT OF THESE BRAND GIANTS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE'RE SAYING:

Uber

"Thank you for not riding with Uber"

youtube.com/watch?v=_e8XLnMiCOE



"Play for the World"

youtube.com/watch?v=nL_UDABXLX8



"Creativity Goes On"

youtube.com/watch?v=Kl1NW7h7lrY



6

Now What?

REACH CAREFULLY.

Industries that bring people together (physically) and make social distancing impossible (like restaurants, gyms, theaters, event locations, etc.) have been affected more than most. To create and protect evaporating revenue streams, they were forced into thinking creatively — which ultimately drives innovation. Some are even strategically creating allies with other companies (even competitors).

But no matter the effort, there's never been a more critical time to be true to brand purpose. Ultimately, it will make the difference between expanding into adjacencies with lasting performance in the post-corona economy or emerging from the crisis at a costly error that could only hamper recovery.



Bottom line, if you make bourbon (for example), now is not the time to transition to hand sanitizer. That's an easy transition that helps not just your customer base but the entire community. The opportunity lies in what your brand can transition into in the short term that helps the greater good during these times.

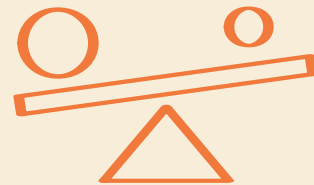
7

Now What?

LEVERAGE PRIOR INVESTMENT.

Here is where brands that have consistently invested (long before the pandemic) in being purpose-driven are better serving their consumers, weathering the storm and even thriving.

Take online grocery shopping. If you've given it a try, you've likely seen who's really got it figured out, and who – rather surprisingly – hasn't.



Demand has dramatically increased for touchless grocery delivery and pickup, and delays are inevitable. People get that. They see grocery workers muscling through insurmountable expectations as heroes. But what consumers still won't tolerate is a clunky interface that's hard to use.

8

Now What?

DO WHAT YOU CAN RIGHT NOW.

If you're just now realizing a lack of investment in your brand is creating problems for your business given the current challenges, take a breath. You may have more options than you might think for immediate improvement.

So much of our lives are online now. And the work required to innovate and activate better online experiences is only slightly impacted by social distancing. It's a natural place to start and can get things headed in the right direction that would only help your brand post-coronavirus.

Keep in mind that having been forced to be more online than ever, many consumers are asking themselves, "Why didn't I do this before?" So online business gains through the pandemic are not likely to revert to pre-disaster levels once it is over.



**INVESTING RIGHT NOW IN IMPROVED
USER EXPERIENCE MAKES SENSE
NOW AND POST-CORONAVIRUS.**

HOPE THIS HELPS!

This too shall pass. Just like every other emergency, large and small. And hopefully you've found a few insights that can help you move forward right now in a way that actually strengthens your brand long-term, well after this pandemic is gone. [And you can always hit me back directly.](#) I'd love to hear your thoughts.

