Positive brand communication techniques during the crisis

BURRELLES
Media Data Beyond Automation

Talkwalker
Knowing how to communicate during the current climate is difficult. Events are changing daily, and we’re having to adapt our marketing strategy quickly. The impact is being felt across almost all industries, and companies are now faced with maintaining their brands during a crisis.

Here are some useful techniques to help you continue engagement and increase sales. Each tip includes effective marketing examples from some of the biggest brand names.
Who is Burrelles?

A front-runner in media data analysis and monitoring

Burrelles is known as a tech-forward media intelligence services provider generating strategic data insights that help drive winning communications programs.

- Founded in 1888
- Headquartered in Florham Park, New Jersey with offices throughout the U.S.
- Provide a simple, seamless and personalized connection to media data across all of today’s channels
- Sourcing includes human-verified coverage from print, online, broadcast and social media as well as content from custom uploads

We specialize in:

- Highly Targeted Media Outreach
- Comprehensive Monitoring
- Evaluation & Analysis

We have the privilege to work with clients who are leaders in the following industries:

- Public Relations
- Financial
- Entertainment
- Cosmetics
- Travel
- Consumer Goods
- Government
- And many, more

We are a members of the following industry organizations:
Who is Talkwalker?

The leader in conversational intelligence

We specialize in:

- Protect
- Measure
- Promote

Talkwalker is a listening and analytics company that empowers brands to optimize their digital strategies by understanding conversations at scale.

- 6 offices worldwide: San Francisco, New York, Frankfurt, Luxembourg (HQ), Paris, and Singapore
- A team of over 350 experts
- 1/3 engineers & data scientists
- Leaders in AI
1. Adapt your sales model

With quarantine situations in place across the world, many stores, restaurants, and offices can’t operate as before. With many facing closure for the near future, consider adapting your sales model to offer new or alternative services.

For restaurants, this often means introducing home delivery or curbside pickup services. Flexibility is key and brands must adapt to meet the current needs.

Chef José Andrés turned his 5-star restaurants into soup kitchens, providing food for out of work families and struggling workers. This aligned perfectly with his brand purpose, supporting his charity World Central Kitchen. The action had 100% positive net sentiment.
Look for requirements that your businesses could fulfill - whether that means providing new services or manufacturing new items.

Facing a potential downturn in requests for ale, BrewDog was able to adapt their manufacturing process for much-desired hand sanitizer. Understanding consumer behavior at this time, helps you identify the requirements your brand can fulfill.

As automotive sales have dropped, Tesla has switched its manufacturing prowess to producing medical ventilators. There were 79.1k mentions of Tesla AND ventilators (with 1.9M engagement) despite Tesla not sharing the story on official channels.
Inditex, owner of clothing brand Zara, is looking to provide hospital scrubs and masks using their clothing production facilities.

Meanwhile, Ryanair has pledged to provide EU governments with planes for rescue flights or to transport emergency equipment.

With TV production having to pause, major shows like The Daily Show are turning digital. The show gained 600k followers in the last 30 days.
2. Provide assistance to key workers

Key workers are facing some of the hardest times right now. Putting themselves at risk, to ensure the rest of the world receives healthcare, medical supplies, and well-stocked supermarkets. By supporting workers with discounted or free products, you’re helping build community spirit, while maintaining support for a vital part of the current ecosystem.

Not only will it help alleviate resources and potentially reduce the duration of the crisis, it will also help improve brand perception. Once everything has settled, consumers will go straight back to spending money on the brands that they love - so building a positive community perception will help your brand in the long run.

Paramount Fine Foods is showing its support to frontline medical staff through discounts and free food.
However, be cautious to think through your offers and manage them carefully, or it could cause more harm than good. After Domino’s Pizza offered free pizza for NHS staff (but only at limited branches), the brand had another issue to deal with, which quickly damaged their brand sentiment.

_Pret-A-Manger_ also assisted by providing hot drinks to UK NHS staff. This response increased mentions of the brand by 256% week-on-week, with an increase of 1.3k% engagement.

_Domino’s Pizza_ ended up facing a crisis within a crisis. When offering exclusive deals, they have to be thought thoroughly before actioning.
3. Provide support to the more vulnerable

At the other end of the spectrum, are the people vulnerable to the virus. This includes people with pre-existing conditions or the elderly, forced to self-isolate for an as yet unspecified duration.

As a brand, you have an opportunity to help these people, again to build community spirit and maximize brand impact on the other side.

Supermarkets are having to tackle an increase in demand, while meeting social distancing requirements. Still, brands like Walmart are finding time to help elderly customers.
The key topics around Walmart are people, employees, and workers. Highlighting the importance of staff in over 700k brand mentions.

Although only a small store, the generous actions of this shop led to this article being shared over 14,000 times on social media, with 137,000 engagements.
4. Create more digital touchpoints to engage your audience

With some stores closed, and people stuck at home, the only way to keep in touch is through digital communication. Now is the time to double down on your digital strategy, and maximize the ways consumers can interact with you online. There are a variety of ways to consider.

Entertain

With people in isolation, they’re craving more entertainment from home. Brands have the opportunity to step up and fulfill this need, keeping that brand touchpoint when usual interactions aren’t possible.

Though normally a social activity, due to the closure of local stores, Games Workshop has moved to more digital content. Creating a new Twitter channel to encourage user-generated content, and opening their Twitch catalog for free.

Planet Fitness is using the opportunity to turn the work-out into the work-in. Engaging their customers (and potential future ones), with social fitness videos on Facebook. Mentions of home work-ins have generated 64.9k engagement so far, while they’ve gained 129k additional followers on Facebook in the last 30 days.
Inform

Providing updates and information in this time of uncertainty can help ease global anxiety, and assist people in adapting their way of life. From working away from the office, to homeschooling, people are finding their lives disrupted. Brands can help tackle these new challenges.

Wendy’s has joined their community on Animal Crossing, demonstrating their understanding of their audience, and how to engage them with relevant content.

Morning Brew has been supplementing their usual business news, with content on working from home, among other things.
Engage

With the closure of bricks & mortar stores, many brands have moved to online retail to drive sales instead. This is simpler for some brands than others, but it is still an opportunity for all marketers by using a bit of ingenuity.

Slack is also providing additional resources to assist remote workers, improving collaboration even when outside of the office.

With the closure of the West End, numerous theater productions have moved to live streaming, offering audiences an opportunity to watch in exchange for a donation. Though not comparable to traditional ticket sales, this offers some funds to help maintain staff during the crisis.
5. Be transparent in your communications

If there was ever a time to be completely open, to lay all your cards on the table, this is it. The divide between consumer and brand is thinner than ever, with everyone from your newest customer to your CEO facing uncertain times.

Transparency can build trust in your brand and reinforce an understanding that we are all operating on a level playing field. Conversely, limited communications or overly self-promotion messaging, will alienate your brand from the people who you will want to connect with in the future.

JetBlue has been providing clear updates to clients and staff throughout. This video follows a publicized letter to staff that openly explained the brand’s situation. The C-Suite also took pay cuts immediately to relieve the company’s financial pressure. When they announced they would provide flights to medical volunteers, brand mentions increased 620%.
6. Engage in relevant community hashtags

Simply sharing the message to self-isolate is important. The more we flatten the curve, the sooner this will all be over and we can go back to “normal.”

With large social audiences, your brand has the reach and brand power to motivate people to follow government guidelines.

In the last 30 days, the use of #stayhome, #staysafe and #stayinside have ballooned from near zero mentions, to 1.9M mentions in total. Often driven by high reaching brands and celebrities.
Cristiano Ronaldo, practically a brand himself, shared the World Help Organizations tips. This became the most engaging tweet for #stayhome, with 135.5k engagements.

ICICI Bank promoted #StaySafe, while also highlighting the benefits of the brand during a crisis. Driving over 200k engagements.
7. Put your employees before your bottom line

At this time, it’s hard to balance the books, with less income. But now’s the time to consider employee welfare above the bank balance.

If they’re not currently working on the frontline to keep the business running, they will still be essential when this is over to get your business back on track. You can’t afford to lose valuable employees just to retrain new ones in the future.

This one example from Delta of putting staff over CEO pay, had 100k engagement, demonstrates how important this action was to consumers.

Under Armour is just one company paying staff while branches are closed. They’re also engaging their audience. This is alongside a pledge to donate up to $2 million in community support as part of a fitness challenge in their digital apps.
It’s not just about wages. Starbucks is offering free therapy to workers, to help cope with the additional stress and pressure felt at this time.

People will remember how companies treated their staff during this time and companies exhibiting negative actions could face consequences from the public once everything has settled. In the UK, the mentions on boycott increased by 316% in 7 days, a sign that some companies could face issues in the future.

The rise of mentions of boycott over 7 days, showing people are getting savvier about which brands are doing a good job, and which certainly aren’t.
8. Offer free trials or usage to meet client needs

If you have the capability, now is a good time to introduce your products to a whole new audience. This can help build awareness, and introduce your brand to potential new customers in the future.

Calm is offering a range of free resources to help people feel less stressed or anxious. Calm app mentions are up 13.4% week on week.

Uber Eats is offering free delivery on orders from local restaurants in the US & Canada, as well as supporting healthcare workers with meals.
Joe Wicks has provided live streams of workouts for children daily, achieving over 14.4 million views since launch. The need was there, and Joe’s Body Coach brand was able to fill it.

9. Keep calm and carry on

As marketers, we now have a responsibility. It may not compare to those battling on the frontline, but that doesn’t mean we should stop and do nothing. We can still be the voice that consumers have always turned to provide reassurance, support and guidance. If we can support with community service, facilities, operations or equipment, we should make every effort to contribute.

But if not, we still play a vital role in keeping this world turning. Providing a bit of normalcy in a crazy world. We can still be the voice that consumers have always trusted to provide reassurance, support and guidance.
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