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Hot File List

TECHNOLOGY BUYERS GUIDE EDITION

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Are You Listening?
- Stay Smart and Safe with Data Security
- A True PaRADigm Shift

Doubling Down

BY KIM KELLEY, FRBMA

If you've ever played blackjack, you know if you feel sure of your hand, you double down on your bet, prepared to come out the winner. But if the next card pulled doesn't work in your favor, you risk going bust. What do you do? As a marketer, few things are more valuable than understanding how your brand fits in with your audience. Pre-COVID, you likely felt confident in your hand day-in and day-out. You knew what to do and had no reservations about doubling down on your strategy. In the COVID-era, it seems the next card continues to be unexpected. What do you do? In the words of the late Kenny Rogers, who sang *The Gambler*, "you gotta know when to hold 'em..." It's best to keep your chair close to the table and learn from an abundance of strategies you can use to save your hand and come out a winner.

Lead with values

Emotion and fear, no matter which side of the spectrum you are on, have been running amok. During this time, your communications should project confidence and the ability to reassure your community that you are taking concerns seriously. Let your audience know you share their concerns, and that empathy is guiding decision-making. Work closely with internal teams to ensure your communications, operations, and real-life experience all match. Now may be the right time to reassess your brand's commitment. Every brand makes promises, and your community must know the brand will uphold those promises.

Remember to communicate with your internal audiences, too. Employees need to know their health and safety is also important. They also need to know that marketing actions won't be putting their comfort level at risk. Tell them what is being said to create continuity in this rollercoaster health crisis.

Keeping messages short and in measured bursts will go a lot further than long paragraphs that likely will not get read.

Lead with technology

What haven't we learned about the value and expanding capabilities of technology during this time? With so many shifting to a WFH environment, digital savvy and communications have risen to the top. With impressive



speed, front-end websites and social media pages were quickly updated with the most recent messaging, and new tech emerged. Being consistent with updates as those messages evolve will build a positive reputation.

Create graphics to share information about the rollout of technology and enhanced safety protocols like health screenings, proper mask-wearing, mobile or remote check-in kiosks, text-to-car waiting, and telehealth options—truly in its moment to shine. Develop clear messaging about the criteria for telehealth appointments, how to virtually connect, and when these services will be available.

Lead with a plan

Thought leaders are turning their attention to where the effect of COVID will end (who knows for sure?) and the marks it will leave on health care strategy. Now is the time to challenge best practices and double down on a plan that brings a steady return to revenue generation.

One of the most interesting turns in strategy planning is needing to assess your audience's mood and whether your marketing and advertising will connect with them in their current state. Are they fearful, angry, sad, or feeling compelled to embrace a new normal? In this environment, a message that is simple, straightforward, and welcoming may be best. Follow through with replication across all touch points and repetition. Default to messages that read like classic brand building, impart confidence in company values, and with a strong connection to place or community.

It should come as no surprise that the strongest and reliable foot forward lies in turning to data. Past performance during challenging times, both in and outside our industry, point to consistency in brand-building being a winning strategy. It is an investment that produces long term results and durability. With smart and creative media choices, odds are you can actually gain market share.

No doubt, the next several months will continue to produce uncertainties, challenges, but also unequalled opportunities. Keep your head in the game, stay curious, and lean into the next card. 



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