

Tell your brand's story in the wake of Covid-19

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In the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, leadership at all levels is being tested. From junior marketing managers to C-level executives, response to the pandemic and its disruption of our day-to-day lives will leave a significant mark on our lives.

For marketing professionals, this is an even more volatile situation. In digital, they have to think beyond using location data and targeting to drive traffic to stores or boost online sales. Marketing agencies and brands are feeling the heat in South Africa following an extended period of lockdown.

In retail, where Generation Z represents 40 percent of global consumers, tactics are shifting. Putting it into the perspective of a respected advertising industry executive, it is clear that brands need to rapidly evolve or go extinct.



Yaw Dwomoh, CEO and Founder of Idea Hive

"We had to temporarily shift as if we were a digital-only business, driving at high speed a set of operations adjustments, UX enhancements and conversion optimisations. We are also spending significant time on framing the evolution for upcoming weeks, months: adapting our service model, rebalancing priorities, and anticipating an efficient and sustainable recovery strategy," says [Grégoire Baret](#), Senior Director, Omnichannel Experience at ADLO.

[According to Vogue Business](#), "The Covid-19 pandemic has hit during the most formative years of Gen Z's lives. How brands respond may define their relationship with this important emerging demographic for years to come."

It is therefore critical that brands tell stories that will effectively help them remain relevant post-Covid-19 and for decades to come. "The brands that will maintain credibility are those that go beyond product marketing. There has never been such a need for empathy, authenticity and transparency than right now. They need to tap into the emotions of consumers; billions of people currently feel dejected, distracted, sad, motivated, productive, inspired and much more," says Yaw Dwomoh, CEO and Founder of Idea Hive, Brand story-telling specialists in Gauteng.

Before you proceed to ramp up your ad spend to try to cut through the Covid-19 noise, here are practical, cost-effective interventions that you can incorporate into your marketing strategy:

1. Let your company leaders be the face of the company

A good example of this was when Adam Mosseri, Head of Instagram, was in the streets of Twitter when [he got a complaint](#) that IG story views were capped at 1,000. This happened at a time when public figures, brands and the general population are heavily using the feature to communicate. He quickly replied saying he was "looking into it." About an hour later, the issue was resolved.

The user, who happened to be a CEO of a social marketing agency would probably been disappointed if he did not reply. In future, in a different context, he would refer to the encounter and probably give rise to a chain of events that would hurt the credibility of Instagram.

2. Do not use the situation to market your brand

The worst thing you can do is to try to cash in on the pandemic. Your messaging could make or break you. Coronavirus is not a hashtag to jump on and try to utilise to ramp up sales. It is a highly sensitive time. Millions have contracted the virus

and hundreds of thousands lost their lives, loved ones, jobs and opportunities.

If you are representing a brand, assess clearly if you really do need a Covid-19 statement and avoid sending out vague assurances with no clear processes. A plausible thing to do is to support a local campaign geared towards pushing the fight against the virus and make a real-time difference.

3. Invest in digital transformation wisely

It is no doubt that Covid-19 will shape the future of our planet. There is a 'new norm' and a radical shift of way of doing things across industries. Colleges that insisted on offering courses onsite have quickly shifted to online learning.

Here in South Africa, [varsities have been relatively successful](#) in online learning. However, as a marketer, you should be cautious not to get carried away by other people's successes. Remember how *Avatar* revolutionised cinema and TV, causing manufacturers to rush to produce 3D sets? Well, after billions of dollars and years of development wasted, the industry segment [officially died in 2017](#).

Says Dwomoh. "Whether it is a virtual meeting software, artificial reality for your marketing strategy or a customer relationship management platform, align yourself with a digital professional, do your research and choose wisely."

4. Review your ad spend

A [recent survey by the Influencer Marketing Hub](#) shows that 69 percent of brands will decrease ad spend in 2020. Instead, they are moving towards storytelling, as it is a more cost-effective method to cut through the advertising clutter. Stories travel wide and have unimaginable power.

5. Use storytelling instead of traditional marketing

"We are, as a species, addicted to stories. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories," says Jonathan Gottschall in his book, *The Storytelling Animal*. A story told by a brand, [just like Nike does](#) through the lens of its collaborator athletes, goes way beyond where advertising can. Its narrative shapes conversation and remains in the minds of millions of people as an indelible imprint. It is high time you take advantage of high-growth media such as social networks, online video, mobile apps and search engine optimisation.

If done correctly, compelling stories can reach customers through the right touchpoints, help them get the right solutions for their problems, emotionally connect them with your brand and retain them for the long term. This, in turn, increases customer lifetime value. Storytelling will help you minimise your customer acquisition costs, as it is [six times more expensive than retaining an existing one](#). Giving your customers value is both pleasing to them and makes them feel that you care about them.

So how do you go about storytelling? You can have a dedicated inhouse team or go to a specialist, reputable agency like [Idea Hive](#). However, note that inhouse content creation requires manpower and may not be effective as employees may not have specialised skills and experience to do so.

Idea Hive has a team of curious, creative, driven and critical thinkers who will change how the world views your brand, for the better. Specialising in branding, design, influencer marketing, visual content and communications, they tell each story from a unique perspective. What makes them unique is that they incorporate technology in storytelling; not just going with a gut feeling.

Your brand gets highly relevant, world-class content marketing assistance. The team at Idea Hive uses real-time data analytics and intelligence, adapting to a range of market conditions. Their AI-driven algorithms also ensure that your brand story is presented to the right customer, at the right time and moment. This brings you as close as possible to your customer and wins them over.

A tailor-made solution is the go-to marketing process we recommend.

You may be offering the same products or solutions as your next competitor but that should not be a worry. For assured growth and a sustainable business for years to come, you need to position yourself as a subject-matter expert in your field and have strong viewpoints that influence buyers into buying into your world. Businesses that do not position themselves as market leaders and actively engage themselves, especially during a pandemic, will not survive in the long term.

Walk the journey with your customer, through hard and good times. Let the customer count on you. Offer original, refreshing and compelling stories that make their lives easier and address their anguish. This will open doors to starting quality conversations with your audience, generate referrals and cross-sell solutions.

About Idea Hive

At Idea Hive we create and execute pioneering Brand Storytelling Solutions to illuminate your brand's power. We apply a strategic framework which extracts and aligns all the key components of your brand's story.

Our team of curious, creative, driven and critical thinkers mould all the elements into a cohesive Brand Storytelling Solution that will change how the market sees and experiences your brand.

We craft and execute heartfelt and character-driven Brand Storytelling campaigns that position your brand/and or organisation to achieve its full market potential.

We offer an array of tailor-made solutions around our services which includes branding, design, influencer marketing, visual content and communications. All solutions are anchored in ensuring that each Brand Story is told exceptionally, uniquely and to the right audience.

Imagine a world where brands defeat normal and ideas inspire change.

When we change, we change the world around us.

For more information please visit:



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