

# Managing your brand in lockdown

*Stick with Me*



Amberjack





# Keep up and step up

Who could have predicted it? A deadly virus spreading global panic. Billions of people in lockdown. Economies driven to the brink. COVID-19 is changing life for everyone. Social distancing, home confinement and virtual working are now routine. Health crisis is compounded by financial crisis. Never before have consumer priorities shifted so radically, so quickly.

Brands need to adapt to this new world order by aligning with fast-moving customer demands, fulfilling social responsibilities and tuning into public sentiment. Those that don't risk isolation and serious fallout. This ebook suggests some tips for crisis-proofing your brand.





## Live in the now

Be responsive and adapt quickly to the new norm. Unprecedented change has reordered mindsets around everything from travel and socialising to team sports and public entertainment. Lockdown has shackled lifestyles for all demographics across pretty much every corner of the planet.

So, don't offer people products and services they can't possibly use or enjoy while confined to their homes for the foreseeable. In the new age of COVID-19, doublecheck your marketing messages and offers aren't obsolete, outdated or poorly targeted. Update, redirect or remove any out-of-step campaigns and content. Brands that are slow to adjust quickly seem unwanted and out of touch.






## Walk the walk

Today's zeitgeist is all about giving. About selfless NHS workers putting their own safety on the line. About 750,000 volunteers offering their time to bolster the national effort. And countless acts of kindness from individuals to help quarantined neighbours. Of course, not everyone is an altruist. But to many, even the UK government is seen as magnanimous, with its raft of financial lifelines.

Brands need to do their bit too. CSR has to be more than a policy. It has to deliver. We applaud engineering firms that repurpose their production lines to make ventilators, or restaurants that ship free meals to feed overstretched hospital staff. It all makes a difference. And makes us feel better. Translate your brand cornerstones into real, positive action that works for the greater good, not just your bottom line. Give something back to help society, inspire customers and motivate your people.

A handwritten sign on a metal fence at night. The sign is white with text written in blue and red ink. The text reads: "This Sun Sushi location will be closed until further notice. Our Torbay road and Kenmount road locations are available for take-out orders. -Thank-you, Mgmt. Visit: sunsushi.com/takeaway".

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# Online is everything

Internet use is soaring as millions of workers log on rather than commute in. For many, the daily shop is exclusively an online shop. Strong online brands are seeing the benefits of pre-crisis investment. As shopfronts remain locked up and down the country, online-savvy brands are still selling product, telling their brand stories and reaching new customers.

Don't be left behind. Brands with well-developed websites, online advertising and social campaigns are setting the pace. Slow-moving brands are suffering. Do whatever you can to improve your online customer experience. Optimise web design, copy and SEO to boost visits and conversion rate. Fine-tune your offers, pricing, fulfilment and delivery services. Rethink your campaigns, social content and channels. Some of these changes can be done in just hours or days. Get expert help if you need it. Act quickly.





## Tune your tone

Retune your tone of voice to sync with public mood. Overnight, COVID-19 is rewriting our definition of normal. Across communities it creates anxiety and fear. People crave signs of hope and reassurance. Like a nation on a war footing, the public tone is less political and partisan, and more direct, urgent and fact-based.

Brands need to speak with integrity too. In this viral climate, spin and hyperbole are sniffed out in an instant. 'Hard sell' often feels off-message. So be frank and genuine. Show you care. Find positive, creative ways of lifting the cloud and bringing your brand to life. We all need a smile and a distraction from the everyday. Keep it sincere and keep your brand on-side.



# Customers are humans

Be sensitive. Overnight, the pandemic is upending certainties about health, jobs and finances. Customer needs and buying patterns are morphing unimaginably. So, the same-old, same-old simply won't cut it anymore. It's time to reboot your approach, get inside your customers' heads, grasp how the crisis is affecting them and tune in.

Listen to your customers. Empathise with their daily troubles. Reassure them that, despite this terrible whirlwind of change, you are still there for them. It's business as usual, even if times are unusual. Remember, lockdown starves people of human contact. So, make the face of your brand more human, flexible and helpful. And, because distancing stresses our mental wellbeing every hour of every day, cut everyone an extra bit of slack.





# Advantage is no advantage

Stories of unsporting opportunism emerged quite soon after social distancing measures hit the UK. Like the high street sports retailer that exploited gym closures with an overnight hike in the price of home exercise equipment. Not their finest hour. Of course, they were rewarded by being shut down when lockdown was imposed a few days later. But, when they do reopen, time will tell whether putting profit before principle has actually paid off.

Profiteering businesses deservedly get a bad press. Customer backlash and brand erosion often follow. But, sometimes, even upstanding brands can take a hit through an innocent action misinterpreted as deliberate advantage-taking. All it takes is an ill-timed price rise to alert a sensitive media and send your brand spiralling into a PR crisis. So, stay extra vigilant and savvy about potential fallout from your commercial decisions.





# Power your people

As for your employees, you can't afford to lose their confidence. It's vital they keep believing in your business and championing your brand through these darker times. But weeks of remote working, wage cuts or social distancing can easily dilute brand loyalty and a sense of corporate togetherness.

Compensate by dialling up all those internal messages and initiatives that reinforce your brand values and personality. Restate the 'why' to give your people something positive to believe in and aim for. At a time when commercial reality may be painful, put your colleagues at the centre of everything. Highlight success stories and individual achievement. Make heroes of your people. After all, people power will be key to your bounce-back when the crisis eases.





# Amberjack

**Amberjack is a team of strategic and creative B2B marketing experts. We help to create and grow brands for all types of business, from young start-ups to global corporates.**

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