



The Barkley COVID-19 POV

03/18/2020

# An open brief for being a useful brand during COVID-19.



## Dear Valued Client,

With every hour and day that passes, you are making tough decisions about your business due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Supply chains are slowing, businesses are closing and consumers are living drastically different lives than just a few days ago. We understand there are no easy answers.

As your partner, it is our responsibility to help you in any way we can. While we can't solve every business problem, we do want to help you answer one question: **"What do we do with the brand?"**

The following document provides a perspective on relevant behaviors and actions modern brands should consider during this unprecedented time in history.

The first action most brands have taken is to publish public letters reassuring their employees and customers that they are doing everything in their power to make stakeholders' lives easier during COVID-19. Most of these letters are thoughtful and honest, and many of you have already taken this step. **But what happens after the letter?** This is what our POV aims to address.

**Our central POV: This is a time for brands to act fast in the coming months. And a time for brands to be as useful as possible by combining purpose + practicality.**

To quote Dr. Michael Ryan of the World Health Organization, "If you need to be right before you move, you will never win. Perfection is the enemy of the good. Speed trumps perfection."

**There are examples big and small.** LVMH in France went big and turned their perfume factory into a hand sanitizer factory. Going small, Disney+ released "Frozen 2" three months early for parents already fighting the stay-at-home work-from-home quagmire.

**The formula: combine your purpose + practicality to help in this time of need.** One great example is Planet Fitness (a Barkley client). We worked with our client to create a program called "United We Move" where the brand is hosting a Facebook Livestream "Work-In" session every day, designed to reduce stress and get a workout in from home. Simple. Practical. And straight from their purpose of "creating a healthier world through pressure-free fitness."

**Attached, you will find a simple, but useful planning framework, along with a series of prompts to help you and your team create an action plan for the brand.**

We will be proactive in the coming days and weeks to help you navigate these steps. Our teams are actively looking for opportunities to help, and we will be reporting back to each of you as fast as we can.

**It is our belief, as hard as this time is, that most brands should not stay on the sidelines.** It's time to get creative, get practical and help people through this difficult time. That's what powerful modern brands do. And, that's what people will remember about you long-term.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to your brand leader, or either one of us directly. We know you are going through a difficult time. We value our partnership and are here to be as useful to you as possible.

Thank you,



Jeff King  
CEO



Dan Fromm  
President

P.S. We are also attaching a document on best practices related to working remotely. We distributed this to our employees this week, and hope it may be helpful to you and your remote employees.



# How to be the most useful brand right now.

**This document is designed to get you back on offense** quickly in a world that is profoundly different than the one we lived in only a few days ago, and that’s changing daily and hourly. Our belief is that no one will blame you if you act now and overreact, but there will be little forgiveness for inaction and underreacting.

**This is not a set of tactical ideas.** Think of this document as a simple, useful planning framework, with key prompts to use alongside your own team’s planning efforts – all to maximize the usefulness of your brand at a time when people need you most. You have a product and/or service people value. Lean into that in a new way. Make your product and/or service its most empathetic, useful self.

**Take action across the whole brand spectrum** — from your internal culture and workforce to the messaging you deliver to your consumers and communities.

## Business Ideas

Inside

Brand Culture    Model    Products + Services    Design + Experience



## Marketing Ideas

Outside

Content    Actions    Experiential    PR    Advertising



# Create an Action Plan Based on a New Journey

Below is a simple framework to organize and create ideas for the next few months. This is the consumer journey you never thought you'd need, but in times of crisis, simple frameworks like this help make decisions. We've used some best practices from Nielsen to build this, but your teams at Barkley will customize it for your brand and will be ready to adapt on the fly.

**Your brand needs speed-to-usefulness.**

- Right now, you're in the "Adjust" phase where consumers are hunkering down and trying to work through logistics, all while being confused with the magnitude of the virus. What can your brand do now to alleviate confusion or add a little joy?
- Next, you'll be in "Peak" – limbo land where your consumers and employees juggle home, work and life, all without a definitive light at the end of the tunnel. How does your brand help physically, mentally?
- After that, the "Recover" phase will come. How do you provide clarity for this unsure time? And when we get back to some sense of normal, how do you collectively create a sigh of relief with your consumers?

	Phase 1: Adjust	Phase 2: Peak	Phase 3: Recover
	What should your brand be doing as people are preparing and adjusting to the reality of staying home?	How does your brand's role in their life change while they are restricted at home? How should your communications shift to reflect that?	What is the new relationship between your product/service and the consumer? What does that mean for your staff? For communication planning?
<b>NEED</b>	e.g., Need to know how to operate in a new reality	e.g., Need small moments to break cabin fever	e.g., Need to still enjoy life in recovery
<b>STRATEGY</b>			
<b>TACTIC</b>			

Use this framework and the following prompts to develop your plan.



# 1. Be Helpful in the New Need States of Daily Life

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All of a sudden, people are less sure of how they are going to get the things they need. Brands must deliver on those immediate needs in creative ways.

For non-essential office workers, working from home is a reality. For essential workers, like those in health care, city sanitation or other vital services, they are scrambling to rearrange their life so that they can work. Most kids are home from school. And while brands won't be providing daycare, they can aim to make home life easier. If you're a CPG brand, give people creative ways to use your product. If you're retail or restaurant, focus on making your app more useful or find ways to minimize interaction while still offering product (delivery, drive-thru).

## Your brand needs to make empathy your superpower.

- Pick a daily challenge to help based on who you are and the product or service you create.
- Pick one of your most vulnerable audiences to help (eg. Single parents, elderly, teachers).
- Take what you do and apply it to one of the many new challenges people are facing.

The following list of daily challenges is sourced from Barkley social listening and rapid secondary research.

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| 1. Working from home with kids  | 9. Entertainment/monoculture: sports and live entertainment are gone for awhile. What fills the gap for things we watch together? | 14. Small businesses frozen without income                                  |
| 2. Information reliability: create a primary source of info on a topic relevant to your brand | 10. Rights of passage postponed (birthdays, weddings, funerals)   | 15. General uncertainty about how long this will last                       |
| 3. Overworked medical workers   | 11. Regular health care: access to non-COVID-19 care and advice (especially when the system is overloaded)                        | 16. Educating kids / virtual learning at home                               |
| 4. Childcare for medical workers  | 12. Lost work and wages: non-salaried workers losing at least a month of income   | 17. Connecting and staying engaged with work and colleagues from a distance |
| 5. Anxiety + mental health: People need new ways to relax without leaving their homes         | 13. Transportation: Lots of public transit shutdown: people not getting in ride-share   | 18. A need for a break from the news  |
| 6. The need for safe interactions outside the house (getting food, gas, etc.)                 |   | 19. A need for quiet  |
| 7. Caring for loved ones when you can't physically see them                                   |   | 20. A need for easy meals   |
| 8. Lack of human contact  |   | 21. Ways to communicate with elderly family                                 |
|   |   | 22. Need to explain to kids what's going on                                 |



## 2. Sacrifice, Tone-Check and Fast-Track Marketing

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Every marketer is assessing their upcoming commercials, content, promotions and PR initiatives. Yes, some efforts should be sacrificed to avoid appearing tone-deaf. If it feels insensitive, pull it. No questions. Even the most irreverent brands are taking a sober stance.

But also look ahead. Many tactics can be recrafted to strike a proper balance between acknowledgment and optimism. And while it's ok to be optimistic, it's not the time to be cute. Your tone has to be tuned for clarity and action. It's great to be human and encouraging in trying times, but the bar for sincerity and authenticity is going to be higher than it has ever been.

### Your brand needs creativity now more than ever.

Look further ahead. What's your version of "Frozen 2" to launch early? Do you have anything in your brand's marketing or product calendar that is almost ready? A summer program in the can? One that could help people deal in this crisis? A piece of content that makes life more enjoyable? Ramp it up and get it out. According to Nielsen, it is estimated that there will be a 60% increase in households using TVs, especially in the daytime.

**Brands are going from selling to streaming.** From our Planet Fitness "Work-In" Facebook Livestream example to children's authors to zoos and museums, brands are becoming the new appointment viewing with live virtual events. For every event, sale, promotion you were planning, can you replace it with an online one? This won't be easy. Think small. Go back through the marketing calendars of the past and think about online efforts that could help.

The following section has data and implications on TV Advertising specifically. Our media team will work with you to assess the best course of action for your brand.

- (+) There will be higher HUT levels (Households Using TVs) especially across news and daytime. This will increase TV's audience reach, and increase the audience "supply."
- (+) Advertisers will pull back, decreasing demand in advertising and potentially making media a buyer's market.
- (+) If the economy is stable, there could be a serious increase in household spending immediately following school closure and quarantine period. Advertisers who remain on air will have a distinct advantage in their ability to prime consumers.
- (-) There will be a decrease in quality programming in the short term (no live events) and the long term (shooting/production currently suspended for many scripted and reality series) and increased pressure on networks to appease larger advertisers with "make goods."
- (-) Depending on how long the crisis lasts, it's possible that network liability and commitments outweigh any of the short-term buyer benefits.



### 3. Find Your Ground Game in the Communities You Serve

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In their book, “A Beautiful Constraint,” authors Mark Barden and Adam Morgan ask a series of “Propelling Questions” when you’re faced with constraints in your business. One of these questions is, “What do you have a surplus of?” What assets do you have at the local level that you can activate?

People inside your brand and in your communities can be your surplus of helpers. The stories will come in. There will be creative ways people are dealing, uniting and helping their local communities. This situation is dynamic and fluid in every state, city, locality. Make sure you have a robust field reporting tool to gain these stories that you can scale.

#### **Your brand needs to think local.**

As we stated upfront, this can be a time for thinking small and local. How can your brand become available to the communities you live in/work in/do business in? Look at the overlap of your brand, your business and your community. What action can you take?

If we don’t flatten the curve, what can your brand offer up to help an overrun health care system? Do you have physical space? Can you create a program just for health care workers? We hope that the worst-case scenario won’t happen, but if it does, you can be a useful actor in it.

When thinking about your ground game, look at the overlaps to come up with solutions:



Ask:

- Do you know how the brand is already impacting the community?
- How are the business and community already interacting?
- Where physically in the community can your brand show up to help?



## 4. Overcommunicate From the Inside-Out

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You can do no wrong by over-communicating when it comes to your own internal workforce and “brand culture.” Make sure to re-evaluate and update employee communications plans. These will become blueprints to keep workforces aligned and informed.

### **Your brand needs to be available.**

- Examine how leadership is communicating with employees as well as how they are encouraging employees to communicate with each other. Consider if additional channels of communication are needed and useful.
- Set standard times for daily updates and create a hierarchy of communication.
- Determine what a backup method of communication will be should the base system fail.
- Create a forum for immediate and 24/7 feedback to give leaders real-time opportunities to listen and ascertain the severity of employee situations.
- Make sure you are communicating sources for physical and mental health help.
- Have an internal plan if someone in the organization tests positive (if not already).





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# Thank you.

Stay healthy, and please don't hesitate to reach out at any time. We will be proactive in the coming days and weeks to help you navigate these steps.