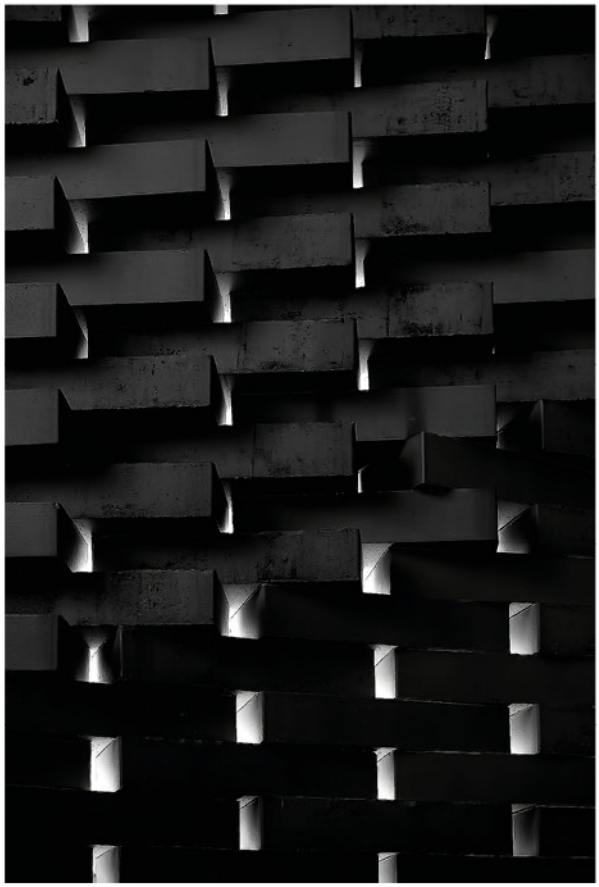

HOW TO GUIDE: SOCIAL MEDIA & COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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Now more than ever, social media is a valuable and important tool – a way to stay on top of the latest Covid-19 conversation and a means through which to communicate with customers, employees and other stakeholders. Read on for some practical guidance for using social media in the current environment. Note that these are not intended to be sequential steps. Rather, they are pillars of activity designed to be performed simultaneously, continuously and interdependently.

1. **Plan.** It is important to establish clear, executable plans for how your organisation is using and managing social media. In particular, you should determine the role of each of your different owned social channels based on an ongoing evaluation of how your different audience groups – customers, employees, media, etc. – are using them.

2. **Monitor.** Social media can help you understand what your key audience groups are saying – both in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic and as regards to more general life and/or business challenges. Ensure you have a person or team dedicated to monitoring social media conversation and updating the wider organisation on the latest audience trends, policies and news. This may require a temporary change to working practices, with teams operating in shifts to cover different timezones. You can also sign up to Edelman Intelligence's Daily Media Update <LINK> to stay on top of the latest COVID-19 developments.

3. **Guide.** From owned company social media platforms to the personal accounts of individual leaders and employees, everyone needs to understand what content is appropriate to share, be aware of response protocols and feel comfortable with how to escalate potential issues. Ensure passwords and access to corporate social media channels are not confined to one person too. That way, you can mitigate the impact of team members becoming unwell or unavailable.

4. **Assess**. Are your planned social media content, influencer campaigns or ad buys relevant and appropriate in the current environment? What would your harshest or most cynical critic say? At a time of unprecedented crisis, everyone is watching what organisations say and do. Being seen as opportunistic or insensitive risks doing serious and lasting damage to your reputation. (See also How-to Guide: Brand Marketing During the Coronavirus Pandemic) Ensure, also, that your content does not contradict any local guidelines around managing Covid-19.

5. **Respond.** How you respond to social media enquiries and interactions is key to preserving trust among your stakeholders, especially in the case of a Covid-19 outbreak within your organisation or

local area. You should develop coronavirus-specific messaging and, if possible, aim to hold a daily conference with your community manager(s), setting clear guidelines for how, when and where to respond. Often, you will need to act fast, but getting your reply right still takes precedent. Be cautious and meticulous in every response, no matter how innocuous the interaction may seem at the time.