



the CROW Chronicle

Home working and isolation are a potential liberator.

Working this way is more efficient and effective. It creates the time for you to delve into and reflect on the category, and to properly plot your competitive strategy and review your brand positioning. It frees precious time to get closer to your target audience, to review & refine your consumer segmentation or even test innovation concepts (research is alive and well incidentally, and consumers who would otherwise be unavailable or harder to recruit suddenly are more open to spending some time with you).

Time For Action

Pull your brand through isolation and come out stronger

These are distressing times, unprecedented times and times when the needs of the community and those most vulnerable in it rightly have to be placed above those of businesses. Nothing supersedes this. For marketers and brands however, this adversity and the social distancing we now face present opportunities to get brand and marketing plans in the best shape they've ever been. Planning can't be rushed but in a packed office and the bustle of day-to-day, that's what happens. Few if any marketing teams are given enough time to develop, refine and sell their plans.

And we mean **proper time**. Not the snatched moments between the multiple distractions of corporate office life. Planning sessions are squeezed in when a calendar gap allows. Instead, the focus becomes getting plans done, getting them sold in. It's little wonder here are gaps and inconsistencies. It's little wonder that there are different agendas pushing the brand in different directions post 'sign-off'. We see six common issues:



- Not all consumers or even business stakeholders **fully understand the brand** or really get behind it
- There are **too many different views** on what the brand stands for and how it should be behaving
- Plan **activities spring out of nowhere**. Ideas get their boots on before strategy has woken up
- The **plan tries to tick every box** (& can't). Everyone's been appeased but the brand makes no impact
- Different agendas. **Plans are derailed by a lack of shared unity** on the strategy or the focus of activities

For brand owners, the commercial world slowing from its usual pace means that there is a **rare opportunity** to stop the fire-fighting and **get deep and strong brand foundations in place**. Foundations, that link powerful insights to purposeful activation, focusing energy on activities that genuinely impact the consumer instead of endlessly discussing and tweaking.

Here's what we recommend in using the time wisely:

- **Spend time understanding your consumers**: don't just re-read an aging insight report. Immerse yourself in their world, properly understand them, talk to them. Pinpoint your target audience, prioritise their needs and place irrefutable insight at the heart of your strategy. Even though we're distancing, we can still get close.
- **Review your positioning**: do consumers, customers, stakeholders and colleagues truly have a shared understanding of the brand, what it delivers & how it delivers it? Is it powerful, consistent and differentiated? If it isn't, now is the time to make changes.
- **Create a brand plan that stands up to challenge**: are the key insights clear? Do they run like a vein of gold all the way through to actions? Do they confront the brutal truths or address the differentiating opportunities? Look at what you're planning: are you 'salami slicing' and investing too little in too many activities? Have you forced sacrifice to execute with scale?
- **Get innovative**: you've finally got time to be creative, do so. You don't need to be in groups to come up with ideas. Time to reflect is stimulus in its own right. Idea generation sessions can be held digitally, innovation frameworks can be agreed to focus efforts on areas with the greatest commercial scope, ideas can be tested, refined and prepared for launch.
- **Build the big sell**: an insight is nothing if it doesn't grab people. A strategy is nothing if it doesn't create action. Innovation is nothing if you can't bring the ideas to life. A brand plan is nothing if it doesn't inspire. Focus time on creating the tools that will sell your brand and your plan not only to customers but also internally, to stakeholders and sales teams. Buy in is everything, don't leave it as an after-thought.

When we all return to offices and 'normality' you don't have to return to a culture of justification and endless debate, you can return with a brand and business strategy that unites, inspires and frees you to focus your efforts on delivering it. It may feel odd to say it, but there's rarely been a better opportunity to set up your brand with foundations of stone as good as this. Grab it.

Thanks for reading and stay fit & healthy
David, Rob and the Crow team

