CONTENT CREATION DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

As marketing experts, it's our job to identify controversial or tone-deaf messaging that could inadvertently damage a company's brand and reputation. Use this checklist to help review your content critically during times of crisis.

CONTENT

- ❏ Avoid fear-based subject lines. Now is not the time to use scare tactics or negative statistics to increase email open rates (e.g., stats on insider threats, stolen data, attrition rates, viral attacks).
- ❏ Avoid subject lines or all caps messaging that might create an undue sense of urgency or panic (e.g., "LAST CHANCE!" "Do these 5 things now!" "6 data disasters waiting to happen").
- ❏ Look out for humorous content that could come across as making light of the situation. Cute ads, puns, and playful social media posts can be considered insensitive and inappropriate during uncertain times.
- ❏ Avoid mixed messages. For example, do not use idioms like "innovation is contagious," "viral marketing," "spread the love," "I'll be in touch," or words like "isolation," "immune," and other language that may be considered poor timing or have double meaning.
- ❏ Reconsider phrases like "need a vacation from…?" "want to get away from…?" or "take a break from…" People likely can't get a break right now.
- ❏ For educational content, rephrase references to "classroom time" now that students are doing remote learning. Be cautious if alluding to graduation, Spring Break, or other school holidays that will likely be impacted during this time.
- ❏ Be intentional and objective when promoting the value of products for remote workers, such as conferencing apps, to avoid the perception of profiteering, upselling, or taking advantage of people who are in difficult circumstances.
- ❏ Be informative, educational, and helpful. Customers may look to businesses for guidance on how to quickly shift to support remote work/schooling or safeguard their data for remote access. Approach these topics with softness and an earnest effort to help.
- ❏ Consider any content that is already in-market that could have the wrong tone or outdated messaging. For example, "always-on" content like nurture emails. Take inventory of anything in-market now that could be seen as inappropriate. Think about campaigns or ads that can be temporarily paused or turned off to avoid overwhelming audiences during a crisis.
- ❏ Consider breaking down email lists into more specific groups, check your autoresponders and previously scheduled emails, send emails with the utmost empathy in mind.

IMAGERY

- ❏ Stick to brand-approved style and imagery. Now may not be the best time to experiment and push boundaries. People will appreciate the consistency and stability.
- ❏ Avoid imagery that could be perceived as overly medical or associated with pathogens, germs, or illness.
- ❏ Avoid imagery of children in schools, cafeterias, or playing together at recess.
- ❏ Avoid images of graduation or school holidays that will likely be impacted during this time.
- ❏ Avoid imagery of people enjoying themselves at large gatherings, parties, or sporting events. Reconsider imagery/illustrations of people huddled around tables or sharing food.
- ❏ Reconsider imagery that flaunts travel, tourism, and leisure activities.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- ❏ Always be mindful of diversity and inclusion. Use imagery of diverse families working from home and helping children with schoolwork; consider children who have disabilities and how their schooling might be different at home.
- ❏ Be careful not to make assumptions about your audience. For example, not everyone can work remotely and practice social distancing at this time. Many people are still required to go to work every day.
- ❏ For educational content, be cognizant of families who do not have the same resources at home or access to computers/internet that others might (keep in mind that most public libraries are closed, too).
- ❏ Many people are looking at potential financial hardship and experiencing high stress, so be mindful of what you're trying to sell them and how.