

WHAT WE SAY AND HOW WE SAY IT MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

COMMUNICATING TO ADD VALUE DURING A CRISIS

A 3-MINUTE GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS BY MIKE WITTENSTEIN

INTRO

HOW SHOULD PROFESSIONALS INTERACT IN A CRISIS?

It can take a common enemy, however invisible, to remind us that others are more like us than not – regardless of their situation, or background, or politics.

In any context, it's not a bad lesson to learn, especially for those of us in client-facing roles.

Keep this guide for reference in the months to come, and refer to it before engaging in crucial conversations or decisions. Hopefully, it will spark ideas for shaping your story in ways that are energizing, refreshing, and genuinely helpful.

WHEN SPEAKING WITH CUSTOMERS...

Take a moment to remember that each of us is human.
We are all going through many of the same challenges
at the same time.

Treat everyone with respect, no matter their level of authority.

Imagine you're the customer and do what adds value for them, even if it means going outside of the usual way your organization provides value or services.

Put people ahead of policy. We all need some flexibility, so if you're in a position to give some, do so.

Ask this question: “What else do you need?” While this simple question may lead to an added sale, its highest value is usually the feeling of personal connection. The answer may help you connect your customers to others who have what they need.

WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH GROUPS...

Be **authentic** (and kind) so that what you say next will be deemed trustworthy. **Now is** not a time to color facts or set unreasonable expectations.

Reduce the effort it takes to understand what you have to say. Simplify the complex, as www.InformationIsBeautiful.net does so well.

Don't ignore the present but remind people of the future –one where we'll have new capabilities and experiences to draw on.

WHEN TAKING ACTION...

Allow others to become the hero. **Everyone wants** to do something positive to help people survive, then thrive, after the pandemic.

SHARE REALISTIC-YET-HOPEFUL PERSPECTIVES, LIKE:

We're lucky that people around the world worked swiftly, on such a massive scale. Otherwise, this pandemic might be far worse.

It only took major companies a week to implement new contactless shopping experiences. We're more adaptable than we knew!

The shift to more remote work will give us all efficient new options to get things done in the future.

This is the first time in history that information has spread faster than disease. It is teaching us how interconnected we are and the value of acting in unison.

IT'S OKAY TO GO FIRST...

Be the one to initiate contact. **You can** start by calling the people you care about most to check in, say hi, and listen to how they are doing.

See what they need. If you can help, help without expectation.

Share what you hear from others with your team. Feeling like you're on the same page with people leads to better decisions.

Use that information to anticipate your customers' and clients' needs. Why? Because when you know sooner, you can serve better and do so at lower cost.

BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION...

Treat **your** customers better than ever before. Make **that** a lasting silver lining of this temporary dark cloud.

Eliminate extra fees, cut the red tape, streamline approvals, offer more leniency, simplify returns, and make access to customer service easier.

Create new kinds of value for your customers, like stores that are opening early for seniors-only hours. Or like restaurants that are refocusing on curbside pickup and menu changes that reflect current needs.

Give customers a moment to share how they're feeling. That may be the most valuable thing you do for them all day.

CLOSE
**IT'S TIME TO PUT
PEOPLE FIRST!**

That's probably the most important communications rule during the unprecedented era we're all going through. Let it rise to the top of the usual checklist of considerations.

Whenever you're not sure what to do, imagine yourself a year from now and ask this question: What did I do during the pandemic – for others?







That's how you and your brand will be remembered. That's how you will be remembered.

How will your organization adapt its purpose and its message? If a thinking partner might help, I'm Mike Wittenstein, and my contact info is on the next page.



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