

# I think you're on mute



By [Jennifer Leppington-Clark](#)

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Most of us who are currently working from home have likely heard that phrase at least twice today. Gone are the sounds of hooting horns and the hum of the car engine during the daily commute. They've been replaced by barking dogs, bored children in the background and "please repeat that we didn't get that," during the never-ending cycle of video calls each day. As if this wasn't enough of an information and sensory overload, these days everything - and I mean everything - is linked to Covid-19. And so it should be. It's a global pandemic, after all, and some say this generation's world war.



Photo by [Jason Rosewell](#) on [Unsplash](#).

While we all try to navigate this new and ever-evolving world, brands and businesses are increasingly looking to make sure they are still heard.

So what is a brand to do to find a voice and space amidst all this noise?

Simple: Follow your purpose. Brands with a clear, authentic purpose, and performance strategies aligned to business objectives, are most likely to succeed. And we do all need to find a way to succeed right now. All around us businesses are closing(ed), and so being able to stay the course, or recover, when things re-open is critical.

A company's purpose is its North Star and it is a useful guide to help brands determine what to do in these unprecedented times, whether it be from an external or internal perspective.



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## Yoco

A brilliant example of this is local South African business, Yoco, a technology company that builds tools and services to help small businesses get paid, run their business better, and grow. Yoco's purpose has always been centred around helping small businesses thrive and they realised that supporting them during this time was more important than ever. The

national lockdown has had a severe impact on its merchants. Yoco's platform's usage statistics, as well as the results of a recent Yoco merchant survey, showed a decrease of up to 90% in in-person transactions since the lockdown began.

Yoco knew that the best way to support their merchants was to develop products that would enable them to do business online and keep money coming in through this period. They, therefore, launched a suite of online payment solutions for merchants to sustain their cash flow during and beyond lockdown. Further to this, they launched a Covid-19 small business guide and the Yoco small business community on Facebook, where they engage regularly with small business owners to help them to navigate this unprecedented time. Yoco's agility and ability to respond quickly to the changing environment has secured them significant brand love and respect. This is a company that is truly living its purpose.



Yoco offers online payment solutions to support small business

29 Apr 2020



## The Dow Chemical Company, Pfizer

Similarly, The Dow Chemical Company's purpose speaks to a "people first" approach and "to leveraging its people and using their unique perspectives and backgrounds to find new ways to solve challenges." Fittingly, the organisation is currently investing in hand sanitiser production and donating this to governments around the world.

Another example is a global pharmaceutical company, Pfizer, which has publically announced that it (along with many others) is working on a vaccine for Covid-19. Its purpose? "At Pfizer, we apply science and our global resources to bring therapies to people that extend and significantly improve their lives."

But having a solid purpose to guide business is not enough. You also need to be able to tell your story effectively. While a purpose has a future-based and emotive element to it, all businesses need to make money to survive. So, while Pfizer will make money should it crack this vaccine code, it has stated publicly that its main focus here is a collaboration with partners to make sure that a solution for the overall greater good is found as quickly as possible.

## Woolworths

When we do media and messaging training with our clients we often speak about how it's important not to sell your product or service in an interview but rather to talk about the problems people are facing today and how your solution addresses them. As an example, at a time when many people are effectively homeschooling their children and unable to travel, many nature reserves, aquariums and zoos around the world are live streaming their enclosures and creating content with zookeepers. (A bonus for the reserves is that nature is finding a way back now that humans have left.)

Locally Woolworths is testing Click & Collect services at selected stores – essentially a drive-through for groceries. This is

addressing both the need to stay at home and not go to the shops but also providing relief to the company's overloaded delivery system. Again, it speaks to their overall purpose of "adding quality to life [and bringing] exceptional quality in every product we sell and every experience we deliver, to our customers and our people." It's also a great story to tell about innovation and finding solutions for its customers.



## Woolworths rolls out drive-through click and collect shopping service

16 Apr 2020



## We're talking to people

Because that, of course, is the final piece of the puzzle – People. That's who we're talking to. We're talking to the people who every day make decisions about which product to buy – the item in the blue packaging or the item in the red packaging. These audiences are navigating a new reality and so their buying habits are changing, their access to goods and how they prefer to interact with brands is all evolving.

As the world changes so too will our ways to authentically connect with our audiences. Brands will need to re-evaluate customer and stakeholder journeys. What worked yesterday will not work tomorrow. But those who stick to their purpose, who let it guide their approach – they are the ones who will not only come out the other side, they will thrive in the new reality.

## ABOUT JENNIFER LEPPINGTON-CLARK

Jennifer Leppington-Clark is the managing director at Hill+Knowlton Strategies South Africa.

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