

Five Things Every CMO or Brand Marketer Should Be Doing Right Now.

by Jason Cieslak
President, Pacific Rim

**Restarting
your company's
economic
engine is where
all CMOs and
Brand Marketers
are focusing.**

It's a COVID-19 world, and in that world, branding—creating, managing and growing brands—has changed. Whether you're B2B or B2C, what matters now is what to do about it.

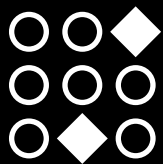
We believe every CMO and Brand Marketer should focus on the following five priorities to reshape your business over the next three to 24 months.

1 Knowing where the disruptions are

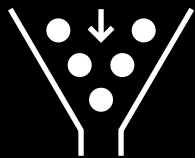
We know life's been upended. But what's changed? And where? Studies show it takes 66 days for humans to develop new habits. That's about how long most of us have been sheltering in place.

During this time, not only has our behavior changed, but the world around us has changed too. There's uncertainty about what's to come in the next year, the next month, the next week. Entire industries are threatened. Businesses you've depended on are going out of business. Combine the world's largest deprivation exercise with an eroding economy, and massive disruptions—in many forms—are well underway in every category.

Five priorities to reshape your business over the next three to 24 months:



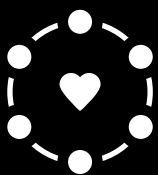
Knowing where the disruptions are



Demand generation is your #1 priority



Customer experiences need immediate attention



Rethinking brand culture in the time of COVID-19



Leaning into purpose

To be clear, this is not just a consumer concern; it impacts B2B audiences too. Many B2B companies were caught in a supply chain and service delivery catch-22 when the virus first hit China and then expanded elsewhere. Many of those companies are also struggling with handling government mandates to work from home or support essential businesses. For some, it's a public-relations nightmare. For others, there are dramatic dips in business and damaged customer relationships.

So, how has your business been disrupted? What's short-term, and what's permanent? What does it mean, and how should you address it?

Here's how we're helping clients understand what's changing for them to determine the best way forward:

- Tailoring research to uncover how customer behaviors, preferences and loyalties have changed, and what's actionable now
- Understanding how B2B and B2C marketplaces and purchase drivers have changed given a rapid economic downturn
- Employee listening to understand new routines and ways of working, evolving attitudes and motivators, and new employer expectations for a COVID-19 world

2 Demand generation is your #1 priority

Restarting your company's economic engine is where all CMOs and Brand Marketers are focusing. Being whipsawed into a recession in a matter of weeks spells short- and long-term trouble for most businesses. Many customers (consumer and B2B) are far more financially focused than they were at the beginning of the year. Some customer segments may disappear altogether, and many aren't ready to re-engage. But you can't wait—and you can't afford a misstep.

Before racing to the next demand generation campaign, smart CMOs and Brand Marketers are asking themselves a few questions: What's the best way to do this? What's the right tone? What are the right touchpoints?

Some brands have earned their reputations as purpose-led organizations, leading to permission to engage customers. Others have not, requiring them to work harder to engage existing and new audiences. How should these positive, neutral or even negative actions inform messaging to drive measurable results?

We're helping clients improve their demand-generation effectiveness by:

- **Fine-tuning core brand messaging during this sensitive period**
- **Conducting training workshops with internal teams and agency partners to ensure the short-term rush to drive sales doesn't come at a long-term cost to the brand**
- **Maximizing the brand portfolio and masterbrand to communicate stability in this uncertain time**
- **Auditing and revising customer experience touchpoints to be in sync with new outbound activities**
- **Helping brands harness their values and purpose in the right way to ensure their messaging stays true to who they really are**

It's not just about a global pandemic; it's an opportunity to transform and differentiate yourself.

3 Customer experiences need immediate attention

The past three months has divided the agile and nimble from the bureaucratic and staid. Those who have empowered their front-line people to make difficult situations workable for customers and employees are the companies that are succeeding. The ones who have invested in their digital experiences are navigating the shift better than those who have not. COVID-19 isn't a press release or page on your website. It's now a lasting dynamic that will shape how and where you do business.

Almost every customer experience touchpoint needs to be evaluated and refined to accommodate social distancing mandates and varying realities across the globe. While this will require real effort for most brands, it also provides an opportunity to reimagine your touchpoints for the long-term. It's not just about a global pandemic; it's an opportunity to transform and differentiate yourself.

So, where do you start, and how do you think about it?

B2B brands won't be led by conferences and in-airport advertising anytime soon. And B2C brands are looking for new ways to engage consumers beyond events, pop-ups and retail.

We're helping our clients evolve and reimagine tomorrow's experiences by:

- **Researching the role of touchpoints in their current eco-systems to understand what needs to change, be added or go away—and why**
- **Consulting on how to envision, prototype and plan for future customer experiences in a proprietary and branded way**
- **Determining how best to measure the success of transformation**

4 Rethinking brand culture in the time of COVID-19

Culture eats strategy for breakfast. But what does that culture look like now with social distancing in the office, large swaths of people working from home and fewer interactions that bring people together?

Great cultures are built on critical pillars, including a unifying purpose, authentic values, leadership, internal practices like events and rewards, incentive and evaluation systems, and collaborative and inclusive work environments. Almost every company is experiencing change in all of these pillars.

CMOs and Brand Marketers play a vital role here along with your HR colleagues. So, what can you do to keep employees engaged and facilitate culture in this new reality?

We're helping clients rethink how their brand culture comes to life by:

- **Analyzing with senior leadership what forces are now shaping their cultures and ideating how to address them as their businesses come back online**
- **Consulting on Return to Work communications to ensure they embody an organization's brand, values and purpose**
- **Establishing new metrics and organizational listening techniques to diagnose and act on change where it's needed**
- **Ideating and implementing new pillars including values, purpose and experiences that stay true to the company's past, but help it transition for the world into the future**
- **Helping those struggling in the war for talent attract and retain the best and brightest in their fields**

5 Leaning into purpose

If you're a CMO or Brand Marketer without a clear organizational purpose, you have a very big problem. The brands finding ways to thrive during this time are mostly purpose-led. They're able to act—and their actions make sense to their people and their customers. They move faster, mobilize and engage their employees, and prove to their loyal customers and partners why doing business with them is different. And better.

Many brands are confusing their purposes with advertising campaigns to talk about the things they're doing. For purpose-led brands, COVID-19 doesn't define who they are; it simply gives them a renewed sense of why they do what they do.

Purpose-led brands are able to act in inspirational ways without calling attention to themselves because their leaders have clear communications platforms to engage their employees first. They're able to articulate to their people the essential role they play for their customers and the world at large. And the media and investors know that even short-term blips won't derail a strong purpose-led company.

If you don't have a clear and compelling purpose that guides your communications and actions—you need it now. If you do have one, but it's lacking or ignored, it's time to revisit it because it's a prime opportunity to benefit from having a north star.

We're helping clients lean into purpose by:

- **Rethinking their purposes and values, so they're truthful to who they are, the impact they make to the world, and enduring and compelling beyond the world today**
- **Looking for more ways to drive their purposes into their organizations to shape culture, employee and organizational actions, and communications**

Our services

**Brand Research
+ Strategy**

**Brand
Communications
+ Verbal Identity**

**Customer
Experience**

Naming

Visual Identity

**Employee
Engagement
+ Culture**

Training

We know it's tough to be a CMO or Brand Marketer right now. We're seeing firsthand with our current clients what needs to be done and the hurdles in the way of doing it right. We're remotely facilitating workshops, conducting audits and creating deliverables helping them chart new courses into the unknown. We can do it for you, too.

