

**How to not forget
brand ROI and
still focus on the
essential in
uncertain times.**

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**The brand is
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Our new normal is unavoidable: every day brings new questions and uncertainty given the COVID-19 epidemic. Between dealing with personal implications of social separation and approaching the immediate crisis communication needs appropriately, it can be hard to find time to focus on other priorities. These pressing requirements can mean that the core asset, key to not only survival, but ultimately long-term growth post-crisis, is forgotten: the brand.

One means for convincing both marketers and non-brand focused clients to maintain such focus is through a simple framework. This framework evaluates whether all activities, both big and small, continue to build a brand for long term value and ROI, as well as measures performance against core competitors and ensures metrics trend in the right direction. This framework has 3 key dimensions: Presence, Engagement and Perceptions. Brands which continue to focus on driving these three metrics in crises and beyond will succeed sustainably, in generating a higher ROI.

This framework is both simple and intuitive, rather than revolutionary. A strong brand needs to perform across all three dimensions, in order to drive business growth most effectively.

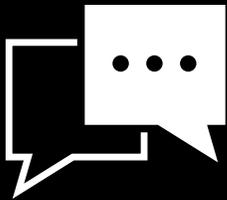
Three key dimensions



Presence

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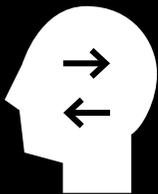
When it comes to brand, size does matter. If a competitor dominates your presence in the marketplace, a brand's message and delivery of positioning will be tarnished. Therefore, all marketers will need to keep a watchful eye on both their overall presence in the marketplace and the minds of their customer base, especially during this time of "seismic change", as coined by the New York Times. How large is your share of mind versus your competition and are you maintaining or increasing it?



Engagement

Share of voice or mind is not everything.

However, a brand's share of voice is not everything/the only important factor. A company can be the largest brand, while also being irrelevant. This can be particularly true at a moment of uncertainty and shift. These are times when new leaders can suddenly emerge, having been more adept in connecting in a meaningful way with their target audience. The depth or strength of engagement matters: are you eliciting a response? Are your customers, employees and prospects engaging with what you are doing or portraying in the marketplace?



Perceptions

Knowing where you stand.

While presence and engagement matter, they can be used ineffectively if you are not building the right perceptions with your most important audiences. Ultimately, growth is determined by creating positive brand perceptions, which drive preference and market share against competitors or ensure prospective talent are more likely to pick you over others. Where do you stand in building positive perceptions that drive preference versus competitors?

Tracking your brand's performance versus key competitors on these dimensions will help ensure your brand is still on the right strategic trajectory, despite the uncertainty and challenging business climate brought about by COVID-19. It can also help you determine whether your marketing investments and tactics are being sustained for the long run, in driving business against the competition.

However, many of you could say: great, the framework makes sense but how do I measure against it right now? This is where the confluence of technology and every interaction becoming digital actually creates an opportunity to achieve goals more efficiently than standard market research methods. One can track performance on the key dimensions of the framework using the rich online data of how people are behaving and thinking right now. It can be captured through web scrapers and APIs. This data is both more real-time and more concrete than survey data might be right now. Capturing it can also help you adjust your tactics much faster than in typical past business cycles, as it is of the moment.

The current climate can mean that many metrics are seeing unusual spikes or drops. Entire industries are flat-lining, yet some, like food and household products, are seeing substantial upticks that are more than likely not sustainable in the long run. In tracking performance correctly, it is more important to understand your brand's performance relative to competitors, both proportionally and in rankings, than compare a metric today to a year ago.

In closing, most marketers have had to make quick and hard calls on many activities, often with overnight content and channel pivots. When faced with such immediate pressures, it becomes harder to focus on long term goals and track how these quick turnaround moves are ultimately impacting the brand and demonstrate ROI. Applying this simple framework of Presence, Engagement and Perceptions to your brand versus your key competitors can help ensure sustainable, long term value building and return on investment.

