

Best practices for PR campaigns during Covid-19

By [Lama Abdelbarr](#)

3 Apr 2020

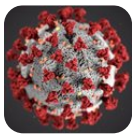
PR agencies, departments, and freelancers across the world have just dropped what they were doing and started asking themselves - and each other - questions that have no historical precedent.



Image credit: bongkarn thanyakij on [Pexels](#).

Should I drop my planned PR campaigns and start thinking about new “relevant” ones?
Should I be pitching to the media right now or is that too insensitive?
Should I showcase how my brand can help in these trying times or will it come across as profiteering?
Should I check with the media if they’re interested in my story that’s not about Covid-19?

Questions that don’t have a historical precedent - unsurprisingly - don’t have historical answers either. However, as it often does, social media brought together the PR and media community to help us navigate these times together and find answers.



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So, based on online conversations from the past few weeks, I put together this guide on what PR professionals should be pitching right now and how they should be doing it.

What you should be pitching

Revisit the [digital PR campaigns](#) you had planned and ask yourself the following questions.

1) Can it be re-focused in a meaningful way to be relevant today?

If you have a campaign that naturally lends itself to being re-focused to include or tie into Covid-19, then you have yourself a plan.

Don't force relevancy if it doesn't naturally exist. Not everything can be made into a virtual tour or an online class. Stay critical of how your brand/campaign fits into the current narrative.

2) If your PR campaign can't be explicitly re-focused, is it still somehow relevant today?

You don't have to add data about Covid-19 to your campaign to make it relevant.

If your brand is in a unique position to still have a significant use today (e.g. cooking, self-care, reading, etc.), then chances are your story will still be relevant to media and audiences alike today.



It is not business as usual, but it is still doing business!

Samantha Hogg 1 Apr 2020



If your brand has a positive story to share, it will be more in-demand now than ever before.

There are many journalists right now looking for ethical, positive stories to add variety to their news coverage. Just be mindful of remaining empathetic with the current situation.

3) Is your PR campaign not at all relevant today?

If you can't pivot, pause.

Carrying on with no acknowledgement of what's happening around us today can do serious long-term damage to your brand.

Keep these campaigns on the backburner for now. If you can, spend that extra bit of time that you couldn't afford a few weeks ago, to [strategise thoroughly, based on data from past campaigns](#). This can put life back into your campaigns and ensure you're ready for a successful launch at a future timely moment.



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How you should be pitching

After you've decided which PR campaigns you will run with, comes the all-important step of approaching the media. Here

are 5 key actions that can help you with the process.

1. Personalising - without crossing the line

This is not the time for generic press releases.

Pay attention to what's going on. Pay reference to what's going on locally. Pay reference to what the journalist has been writing about or tweeting about.

Highlight exclusivity if you can offer it.

That being said, do not call to follow up. Follow up calls are generally not popular amongst the media. Moreso now - during times of stress and anxiety - journalists would not appreciate the extra stress of being bombarded or chased by calls.

2. Adding an expert voice

A spokesperson who can contribute to a story, will elevate your pitch and make it stand out in media inboxes that are currently full of guides of activities to do indoors, virtual tours, and online classes now being offered.

An expert voice can add that sense of authority and security that we are all seeking right now. It adds long term credibility and expertise for your brand too.



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3. Minding your own voice

Cheeky pitch emails can guarantee sky-high open rates and land coverage links left and right. On a normal day.

Right now, you shouldn't be using human tragedy as a news hook.

Keep your communication empathetic and positive. Highlight areas of social good or social impact. Be extra conscious of not spreading misinformation. Back up your campaigns with data and/or expertise.

4. Adapting lifestyle PR tactics - reviews are cancelled but samples are still serving

Lifestyle PR is home to some of the industry's favourite cornerstones - reviews and product samples.

However, today's reality finds us without concrete timelines. So, previews of restaurants or hotels that are opening up at a future date are not the most compelling pitches right now.

Samples, however, can still work. First, check with the journalists if they would be open to receiving the samples (this is a highly sensitive and personal decision after all). Make sure you can offer contactless delivery - and highlight that in your pitch.

Stay mindful of the product samples you're sending - try to think of products that can be used in isolation. Pitch products that you know are in stock with reasonable delivery time frames to ensure that you're adding value to the media and audience alike.



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5. *Living for slow living*

With all the uncertainty floating about, the one thing we know for sure is that it's time to slow down. If your brand can offer insights or offers into slow living (think meditation & yoga, cooking, self-care routines, etc.), you can add value by sharing expertise.

Be careful not to boast about how your brand took off during the crisis - you don't want to come across as profiteering from a tragedy.

Finally, don't be discouraged if your campaigns aren't landing right now or if you're not hearing back from the media. Just as me and you are scrambling around trying to figure out how to reshuffle plans and strategies in these unprecedented times - so are journalists.

Just remember - crises are temporary, sharing reliable information is our ethical responsibility, and empathy and humanity unite us.

ABOUT LAMA ABDELBARR

Lama Abdelbarr heads up Digital Marketing & PR (Middle East & Africa) at Talkwalker.

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