

Navigating uncertainty

The Vuelio toolkit for communicators

Updated: April 2020



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Introduction

When we first created this toolkit, we wanted to bring together useful resources for PR and comms practitioners adapting to their new working environments. At the time we didn't realise how popular it would be, nor how many additional resources would be created by this incredible industry.

In this updated version, we've added more resources alongside the original support to help with working from home and making the most of team collaborations. We've got extra tools from different organisations and agencies, as well as the industry bodies CIPR and PRCA.

The principals for many communications teams remain the same during this health crisis: deliver coordinated and effective messaging to external and internal audiences. We know for many, there are still serious challenges to meeting these requirements while working in unusual circumstances, and we continue to look for ways to support those frontline services as they adapt.

Most recently, we've been able to provide free newsrooms to frontline services, charities, public sector and educational organisations as part of their Media Database and Distribution packages. This ensures clarity to all their stakeholders and consistent messaging.

We're also still providing the daily COVID-19 bulletin, a free email newsletter that is delivered each evening summarising the latest Government advice alongside official and stakeholder announcements.

This bulletin keeps you up to date with a rapidly evolving landscape and ensures you can quickly respond to any regulatory requirements or adapt your strategy to meet societal needs.

You can sign up to receive the bulletin [here](#).

As we all are forced to adapt to this way of living, our culture is shifting to define the new normal. In this toolkit, we have included a snapshot of an initiative from our sister brand Pulsar, which is mapping the new normal to see how online conversations are revealing the changes each of us are making in our daily lives.

You can see the full [Mapping the New Normal project here](#).

We are still in uncertain times and the role of PR and comms is more vital now than it has ever been. We hope you find this toolkit useful in your day-to-day work, and if there is anything else you would like to see included in future, please don't hesitate to [get in touch](#).

Take care

The Vuelio Team

Mapping the New Normal

New behaviours are emerging as everyone, both personally and professionally, adapts to the new normal. This shared reality is largely being shaped by the requirements of Government-regulated lockdowns, business disruption and the capabilities of technology.

While some of these changes are inevitably short-term that won't carry into post-crisis times (presumably the 5G backlash will end and people probably won't keep cutting their own hair...), some are likely to carry on and change the way we work, travel and live into the future.

Online collaboration

Perhaps one of the least surprising transitions for anyone now working at home, is online collaboration. We're all getting used to Zoom or Teams, and remembering not to leave our microphone on past the end of the call. What is surprising though, is the rise in public collaboration and document sharing.

This graph shows the rise in Google docs being shared online, with many tweeting out links to documents to source contributions and, of course, surveys and forms being created on the easily-shareable Google platform.

For anyone working in PR and comms, the opportunity to adapt is clear – more people will be used to receiving and working with these cloud-based resources so they will become a more accepted form of communication. Market research in particular will benefit from this new normal.



TRENDS

See tweets over time for #newnormal tiktok – Worldwide – Apr 01, 2019 – Mar 31, 2020

Share this



TikTok

We have also seen a rise in social media use, which is not surprising considering how little it is possible to socialise offline, but one platform in particular is experiencing a new-normal bump.

TikTok has seen steep rises in mentions online, with spikes around viral videos that are shared across other platforms. While it still has an audience skewed towards the younger generations, for many brands, this as a reason to join TikTok and reach their target audience where they are spending time during the lockdown.

Community

Another new normal that can help PRs communicate is the rise of the community. In many ways the isolation has brought disparate groups closer together. This chart shows the mentions of community in relation to the outbreak, as more conversations acknowledge the way the virus is affecting them.

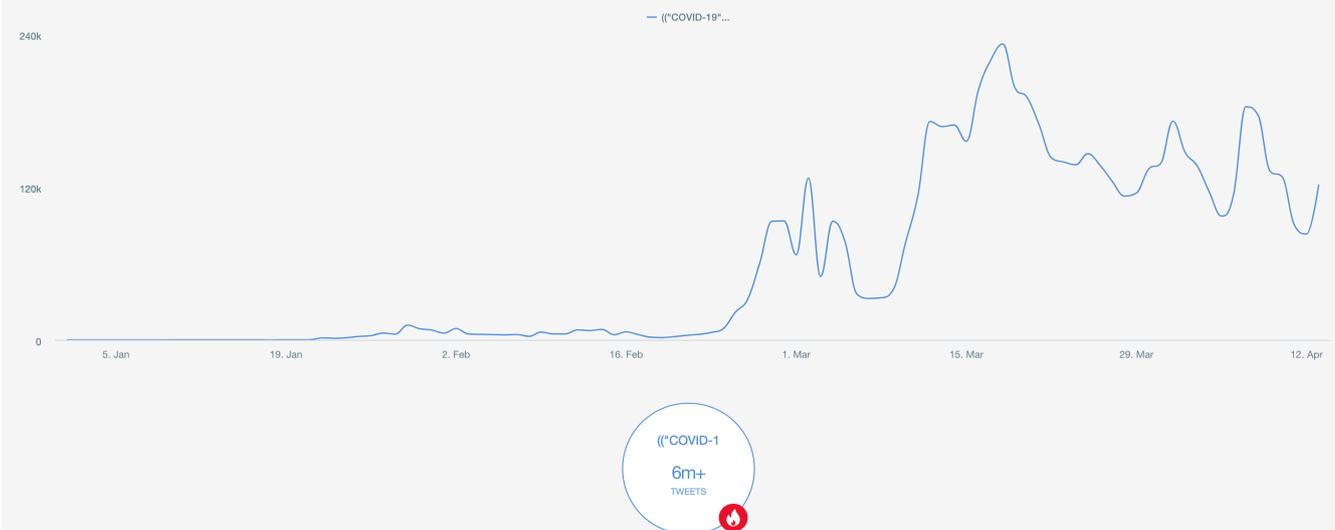
Anyone on any social platform will have seen extraordinary videos and pictures of local communities coming together to support each other, whether with birthday wishes to young children or clapping for the NHS.

Despite the fact we're not currently allowed near each other, we might all come out the other side of this period in stronger communities, with stronger ties to each other and a new normal that benefits us all.

TRENDS

See tweets over time for #newnormal communities – Worldwide – Jan 01, 2020 – Apr 13, 2020

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Industry resources for communications teams

CIPR

The CIPR has created a number of resources to support its members and the industry adjust to the current climate. Most recently its [Progress](#) initiative, a free member mentoring scheme that's launched with 48 mentors, who are all CIPR Fellows. It will give mentees a safe space to discuss challenges, explore opportunities and plan future career actions. From mental health and wellbeing to advice and professional development, check out the full list of [CIPR](#) [support here](#).

PRCA

The PRCA has created the Global COVID-19 Public Communications Taskforce to support practitioners around the world. As well as providing practical resources like the [free consultation service](#) for leaders in need of support and advice, the Taskforce is advocating for the importance of the role of PR and, alongside the CIPR, lobbying Government for further support for freelancers.

HotComms Toolkit

The [HotComms Toolkit](#) is a collection of useful resources and content from global agency Hotwire. Covering a wide variety of topics, you can find everything from 'Outtakes from our client discussions' and 'Are podcasts the next big opportunity for digital marketing' to 'Tips for producing video at scale' and 'Three tips for internal comms to a remote workforce'.

Newgate News

Newgate News is the brainchild of Newgate Communications and takes the form of a daily newsletter. Covering the latest Government announcements and advice to deal with the crisis, Newgate News also has non-COVID content to help people learn and grow with blog and podcast recommendations. Plus, the full archive of each newsletter is [available online](#).

Pulse Checks

Question & Retain, the 'virtual' insights agency, is offering businesses a free [Pulse Check](#) email tool to help leadership teams understand what their employees are thinking and feeling while in temporary working conditions. This will help businesses support their staff better and stay on top of challenges organisations may be facing.

Coronacast

With weekly insights on how the media is changing and reacting in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bottle Digital PR's [Coronacast](#) is a useful tool to find out how the wider industry, and society, is being affected. It's not all doom and gloom either, with good news stories and handy hints – such as this [lockdown checklist for marketers](#) – making this a must read.

Look After

Set up by Nic Young after his new job was lost in the business disruption, [Look After](#) is a team of around 100 specialists – from PR and comms to social media and design – that donate their time and expertise to help raise the profile and finesse the strategy of businesses and charities involved in dealing with the coronavirus crisis.

Developing resilience in communications

Best practice in virtual events

All in-person events have now stopped. Hosts have been faced with a difficult decision: cancel, postpone or take the event online. With huge numbers now remote working, holding a virtual event can be effective. **Virtual expos** enable delegates to 'visit' the different stands, download the relevant collateral and speak directly with the supplier through a messaging app.

For smaller virtual meetings and seminars, **Zoom** has a free offering to live stream meetings of up to 100 participants that last for 40 minutes or less. With a chat function built in, you can easily communicate with your guests and get a lively Q&A going. There's an option to record your meeting too, so if anyone is unable to attend they can still enjoy the content at a time that works for them.

And when it comes to promoting, inviting and keeping track of your attendees, **Eventbrite** is an accessible and easy-to-use tool. Plus, if you're hosting a free event, it's free to use.

Virtual networking

With the opportunity to meet with industry peers, clients and prospects not possible for the foreseeable future, we need to get creative with how we network. Utilising social media platforms and engaging with networks through groups, forums and blogs, has become the new virtual coffee shop or pub. Joining in Twitter chats such as Ella Minty's **#PowerAndInfluence** are a great way to stay on top of hot industry topics and discussions, while also 'meeting' new contacts.

PRFest has also made its June event virtual and in the meantime has been hosting **#PRsUnite** hangouts on Zoom. These group chats allow discussions of work, home life, challenges and opportunities, and are free to attend.

Coordinate Communications

With everyone working remotely, it's important to ensure consistency both internally and externally and maximise the value of your comms. **Vuelio** has tools to understand who is important, how best to engage them and allows you to send your content. At the same time, you can monitor mentions of your organisation and analyse your effectiveness, all in one place. And if you're able to support journalists and broadcasters with their content, the **ResponseSource Journalist Enquiry Service** is still running at full capacity with hundreds of enquiries both connected to COVID-19 and entirely unrelated.

Keeping in touch with your team

Your place of work may have already instituted a way to chat online while in the office. Group chat software **Microsoft Teams**, **Slack** and **Google Hangouts** are popular choices and work well for keeping in touch remotely, allowing for document sharing, group chats, video calls and gifs. If your team culture is more casual, apps you use with friends can also work – WhatsApp is a natural choice for friendly teams and even the gamers' voice and text chat app **Discord** can be utilised.

Getting projects on course

Keeping projects organised and moving forward is easier with digital options – **Trello** and **Google Drive** are workable solutions for staying on course when out of office. **Vuelio's Stakeholder Management Tools** can also be used to track developments across key comms issues and contacts, with everything recorded in one place that is viewable across the whole team.

Collaborating with co-workers and clients

We've mentioned Stakeholder Management as a place to keep your projects on track – it's also great for quickly sharing progress and aims with your team in clear formats. You can also work collaboratively on **Facebook Workplace** ('like your Facebook News Feed, but about work') or **Microsoft Project** for scheduling tasks and assigning resources. If you miss your office whiteboard for sketching out ideas and brainstorming, you can do it digitally (and collaboratively) with the **Sketchboard** app.

Staying focused

Regular breaks are important both in and out of the office, especially breaks away from the screen. When the temptation to take a break from reports with YouTube or eBay instead of some fresh air is too much, there are apps to help. **Freedom**, long-used by freelancers who know the problem of online distractions all too well, will block access to the 'wrong' sites completely during work hours, across all your devices. Mac users can go with **SelfControl**, and **Cold Turkey** even has an option to block your entire computer for a certain time period. If temptations aren't your problem, but too many incoming distractions are, **Daywise** will deliver notifications to you when you have time for them. And if you want to ensure you're making the most of your time at home during work hours, **Focus Booster** and **RescueTime** can help.

Looking after yourself

Even if you normally like quiet time, longer-term remote working can be hard on both mental and physical wellbeing. Alongside taking breaks, apps for keeping calm in times of stress like **Headspace**, **Simple Habit** or **Smiling Mind** can help with mindfulness and meditation. For immediate feelings of anxiety, the **SAM** app (developed in collaboration with a research team at UWE, Bristol) is worth downloading to your phone, and **Meditopia** could help with changing behaviour and improving mental wellbeing while you're working in what could be difficult circumstances. And if you want to stay active, join Vuelio's **accesswellbeing – Virtual Yoga for Comms** every Wednesday at 6pm from the comfort of your home.

Positive start to the day

Starting each day on a positive note sets you up for what's accepted as an otherwise challenging time. There are lots of ways to do this, from chatting with family and friends to watching your favourite show. For something new, try adding **Wakey** into your morning routine – the breakfast TV show has a dedicated app with a mission to promote good mental health and brighten up your day. With Q&As, games and quizzes, it's definitely one not to miss.

Background noise, if you're missing the office...

A Spotify playlist or your podcast of choice doesn't typically replicate the unique noises of your usual workspace, and can even be distracting if remote working is new to you. Recreate the noises of the office (or forest, or beach) with a **Noisli** free account, or the sounds of working from a coffee shop with **Coffivity** if you want (simulated) company. Alternatively, being part of a hard-working and well-organised team, wherever you are, can be replicated with this **12-hour mix of ambient engine noise on the USS Enterprise** (though that's on YouTube, so make sure you unblock it on Freedom or Cold Turkey first).

Have you found hacks to help you in this new world of work?

Share your tips with the community on Twitter via [#PRtoolkit @Vuelio](#)

Top 10 ways to keep your comms effective in a crisis

1. Put in place a process for communicating with your team
2. Agree sign off process and stick to it
3. Create a clear, accessible filing system to save docs (and draft versions)
4. Have a process for tracking and coordinating stakeholder feedback – whether that is journalists, politicians or community groups
5. Have an on-call rota and be clear on handover
6. Review all marketing and internal comms channels so you know what is going out when, and agree a process to coordinate. This includes making sure you can sense check what you issue is sensitive to external change
7. Make sure you are honest and direct in all your communications messaging, and clear as to whether you are providing information or need people to act on what you publish
8. Monitor and review results: what worked or needs to be improved? Have your key audiences got the information they needed?
9. Once the process has been tested, take time out to plan ahead – what is your key announcement next week or the week after?
10. Evaluate all activity against your immediate and long-term organisational objectives



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