

Whitestone International

RESEARCH | STRATEGY | BRANDING | ACTIVATION | B2B & B2C

THE NEXT NORMAL?
LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF CHANGE.
THE NEED FOR TRUST & CONTINUITY.
THE POWER OF BRANDS, TEAMS & ACTIONS

DISCOVERING THE POWER OF BRANDS, TEAMS & ACTIONS.

The COVID outbreak has had a devastating impact on society and a knock on effect on what we all considered 'normal' in relation to our health, business and every day life.

As a result, change is headline news. And consumer confidence, willingness to invest and employment are likely to take a more prolonged and nuanced curve towards the 'next normal', compared to the epidemiological trajectory of the coronavirus itself.

In this document, we explore the power of brands, teams and actions to create leadership and continuity and ask the questions:

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EMBRACING THE CURVE OF CHANGE.

Specifically, we'll look at how those concerned with strategies, narratives, marketing and branding can protect, communicate and manage their brands, teams and actions along the curve and make the next normal more purposeful and sustainable than before.

We'll explore ways to create continuity during uncertainty. We'll learn how to respond to a rapidly changing world. Crucially, we'll explore how to prepare for the next normal by thinking strategically, telling the right story and visually engaging audiences. And if you're asking yourself when is the time to do this, consider that:

- 78% of consumers believe brands should be helping them in their daily lives right now
- 75% say brands should be informing people of what they're doing
- and only 8% of consumers believe brands should stop advertising during this time*

**NOW IS NOT THE TIME, AND
YET IT IS!**

* From a Kantar global survey responding to the coronavirus outbreak, conducted across more than 35,000 consumers.

LEADING WITH EMPATHY. ACTING WITH COURAGE.

For those willing and able to think long-term, now is the time to respond, adapt, update and reimagine your brand, and how it can be used to relate, inspire and move forward.

We have already seen a large proportion of reactionary advertising, communications, branding and even identities focusing on COVID related content. But as the curve of the virus flattens, it is looking like its implications will lead us into a period of recession and trepidation around returning to brand-focussed content.



SO HOW CAN WE GET AHEAD OF THE CURVE?

- Refocus unused operational, experiential or media spend on long-term brand investment
- Get your teams and resources into a position to be ahead of those waiting for the return to 'normal' and be the brand who consumers, employees and investors remember
- Ensure what you say and do now, during COVID, lays the foundations for where you go next
- Constantly scan the horizon for latest trends and events which may impact, inform or inspire you

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01.

WHERE COULD THE NEXT NORMAL TAKE US?

UNDERSTANDING, PLANNING & LEARNING

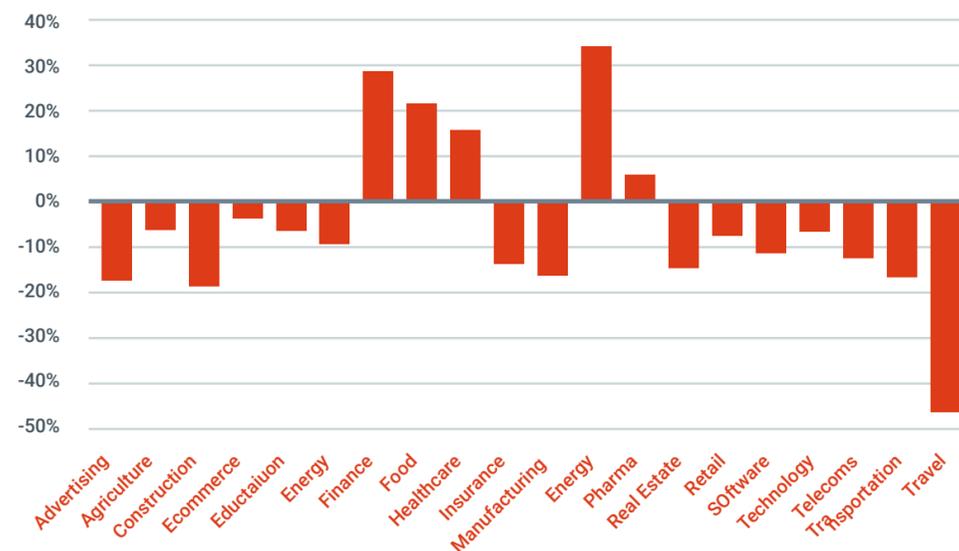
01. UNDERSTANDING THE RESPONSE.

The immediacy of how life has changed quite this much is startling; and it is this rapid response that sets times of crisis apart from shifts and trends that evolve from new information, technology, generations and mindsets.

Travel, leisure, hospitality, events and sports were some of the first areas to be affected and we've seen businesses within those sectors respond in different ways. At the same time, we saw immediate surges in demand for certain products to get us set up for our new lives of working, exercising and socialising at home.

**SO
WHAT NEXT?**

Traffic growth or decline due to COVID-19 (April 2020)



01. **PLANNING** FOR THE NEXT NORMAL.

In order to lead in a time of COVID and change, being prepared for the next phase will involve a period of:

- **Navigation**
leading, uniting and supporting a new agenda
- **Empathy**
demonstrating human nature and a change in brand behaviour
- **Continuity**
providing stability in the present and embracing the next normal
- **Being our best selves**
answering the call to make purpose your practice
- **Reassessment**
continuously reviewing and evolving your strategy in view of an unpredictable world

The curve of the virus itself and how long the restrictions on our lifestyles continue will impact how quickly people and businesses bounce back to 'normal'; but consider when that time comes...

WILL WE GO BACK TO HOW WE WERE BEFORE?
WHAT WILL THE NEXT NORMAL LOOK LIKE?
CAN THE NEXT NORMAL TAKE US FURTHER?

01. **LEARNING FROM THE PAST.**

History has taught us that major epidemics, pandemics, events, and recessions can both temporarily and permanently realign people's attitudes, priorities and behaviours.

9/11 had a temporary impact on air travel, which returned to 'normal' after 15 months. SARS instigated the huge and sustained growth of ecommerce, in particular Alibaba, in Asia. And the 2008 recession was a large contributing factor to the birth and growth of the sharing economy and brands such as Uber and Airbnb.

Anticipating the social, economic and environmental shifts that will shape what the journey through and to the other side of COVID looks like, will create opportunities for long-term brand sustainability and competitive advantage.

**WHAT WILL BE TEMPORARY vs
SUSTAINED CHANGE?**

01. IDENTIFYING THE TRENDS.

Whilst no-one can predict with complete certainty where we will go next, we can monitor, listen, and look at recent trends to hear what people are already asking for. From there, we can identify areas of focus that will likely be taken further in the next normal. For instance...

- ... Increased demand for inclusiveness and belonging
- ... New work-life norms, flexi-locations and gig economy
- ... Stronger purpose-driven brands and employer value propositions
- ... Heightened environmental and social consciousness
- ... Systems and processes for resilience, continuity and sustainability
- ... Nationalistic focus and decreased international dependency

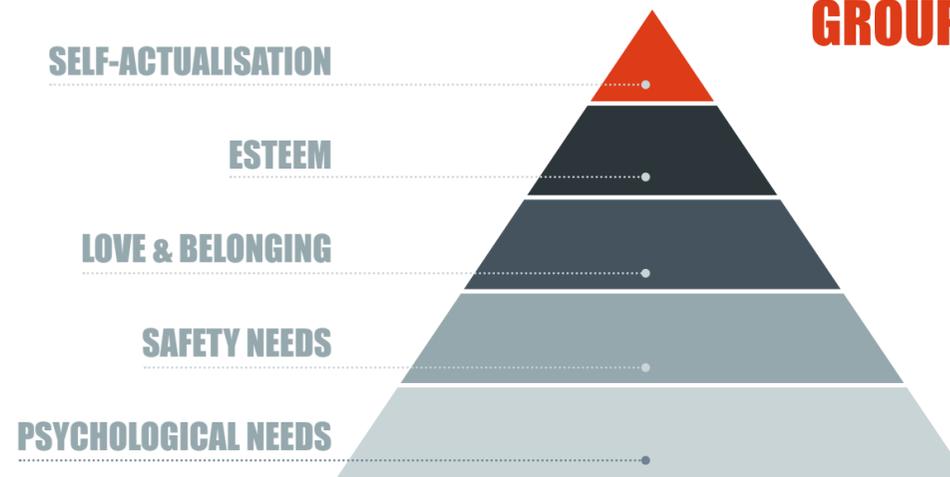
**WILL THESE TRENDS CONTINUE
TO BE RELEVANT & WILL THEY
BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT?**

01. **CONSIDERING** AUDIENCE NEEDS.

THE NEXT NORMAL

To start to predict how people will realign, we can also look to basic human needs. Whilst in various forms and stages of lock-down, we are in this together and our requirements are closely aligned to each other's. These are currently weighted towards the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of needs – physiological, safety, love and belonging.

But as we move along the curve towards the next normal, audience behaviours in seeking out the top level of needs – esteem and self – have the potential to be more diverse in outcome and timeframe across different audience demographics, economics and geographics.



HOW WILL MY AUDIENCE GROUPS BEHAVE?

- ... Will they demand a quick turnaround and want to experience as much as possible as soon as possible?
- ... Will they be more cautious in returning to habits and routine?
- ... Will they have a permanent shift in priorities, outlooks and needs?

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02.

NAVIGATING THROUGH UNPRECEDENTED CHANGE

THE POWER OF BRANDS, TEAMS & ACTIONS

02. FILLING THE GAP & GOING BEYOND.

Despite the increased frequency and quantity of information from political leaders and other sources from around the world right now, the void of consistency, trust and confidence is deepening. Business leaders have an opportunity to fill this gap and steer employees, communities, customers, investors, and stakeholders towards their 'true north'.

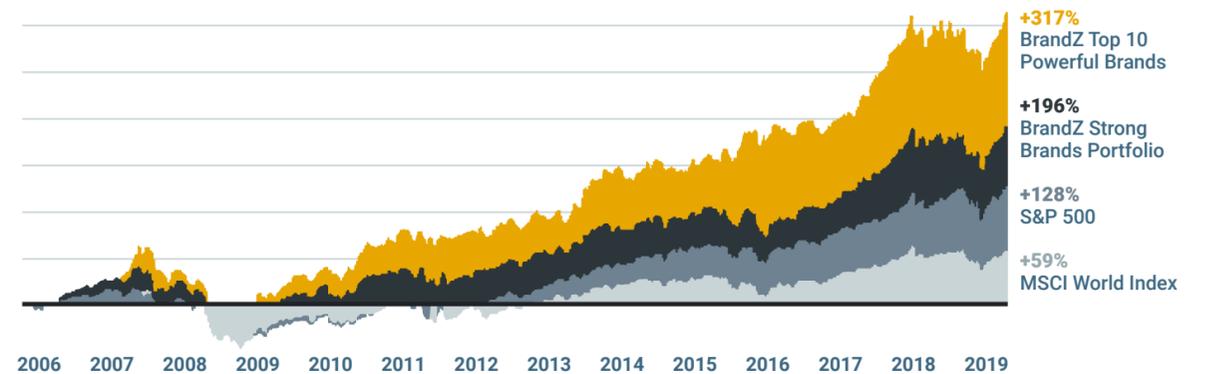
The World Economic Forum and its COVID Action Platform has set out that: *"As business leaders, we pledge to stand at society's service, to help preserve and rebuild a viable society and economy, and to do all we can for our stakeholders."*

PEOPLE WILL BE LOOKING TO BUSINESSES, MORE THAN EVER, TO USE THE TRUE VALUE, PURPOSE & INFLUENCE OF THEIR BRANDS TO GO BEYOND THE PRODUCTS & SERVICES THAT THEY PROVIDE.

02. MONITORING IMPACT & REACTION THROUGH BRAND EQUITY.

Brands have an important role to play at all times. Now, more than ever, they are integral in keeping audiences connected, engaged and entertained. In doing so, brands have an opportunity to strengthen their significance and meaning in people’s lives. This is exactly what happened following the financial crash in 2008 when it was the strongest brands which took the necessary measures to recover the fastest.

*We’ve seen before that strong brands recovered NINE TIMES faster following the financial crisis of 2008



* From Kantar data showing recovery of BrandZ top brands from 2006 through the 2008 recession and to 2017.

02.

BUILDING THE BRAND TO MAKE AN IMPACT.

- **Brand strategy and equity** aid economic recovery.
- **Brand purpose** shapes the curve of societal and environmental change.
- **Brand communications** transform what people think and feel.
- **Brand personality and behaviours** translate thinking into initiative.
- **Brand communities** make it possible to achieve more together.

Supported by their teams and actions, brands can be heroes and show a human side to businesses as they step up in the ways they **lead, unite and influence...**



02. LEADING WITH THE BRAND.

Brands are how we navigate a cluttered world, perceive value, and determine trust – they are integral in keeping audiences connected, engaged and entertained. In doing so, brands have an opportunity to strengthen their significance and meaning in people’s lives, enabling a faster recovery for society and the economy.

CLICK ON THE ‘BRANDS’ ATTRIBUTES TO READ MORE...



BRANDS

LEAD

CULTURE | CLARITY | COMMUNICATORS
COMMUNITY | CHAMPIONS

IMMEDIACY | INNOVATION
INCLUSIVENESS | INSIGHT | IMPACT

02. UNITING FOR THE NEXT NORMAL.

Brands are built from the inside out. Therefore, a key place to focus is on the people who contribute to a brand’s culture, shape the customer experience and provide the human face of a brand – whether B2B or B2C. But as a ‘contact-free’ economy is expected to further boom, how will the role of teams and people evolve?

CLICK ON THE ‘TEAMS’ ATTRIBUTES TO READ MORE...

PROTECTION | PURPOSE | PRINCIPLES
PERSONALITY | PROACTIVE



TEAMS

IMMEDIACY | INNOVATION
INCLUSIVENESS | INSIGHT | IMPACT



02. INFLUENCING THE NEXT NORMAL.

The actions and reactions of every business and every industry will be different. And the way and the speed at which the global population has already changed how we act and do business is something to be celebrated.

Whilst brands need to lead with empathy, they must act with courage and conviction. Focusing on actions around brand strategy, company culture, marketing and communications, will be what sets the overall tone and helps shape how you reach, reassure, resonate, support and benefit audiences – now and beyond.

CLICK ON THE 'ACTIONS' ATTRIBUTES TO READ MORE...

PROTECTION | PURPOSE | PRINCIPLES
PERSONALITY | PROACTIVE



ACTIONS

CULTURE | CLARITY | COMMUNICATORS
COMMUNITY | CHAMPIONS



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03.

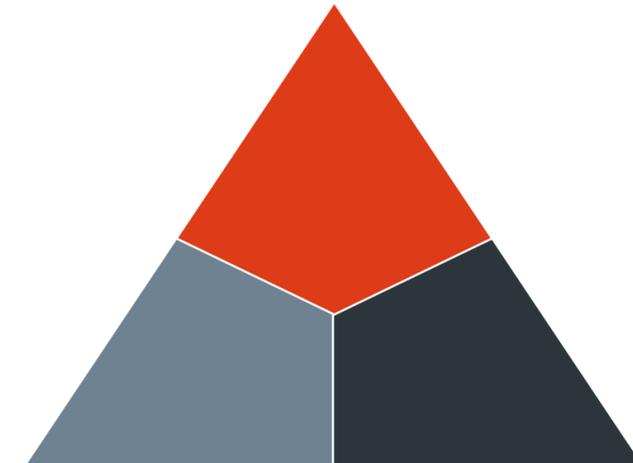
WHAT CAN WE DO NEXT?

THE APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE, STORYTELLING & EXPERIENCE
BUILDING ON BRAND FOUNDATIONS

03. USING THIS TIME TO **THINK. TELL. VISUALISE.**

Having considered where the next normal could take us and how brands, teams and actions can help navigate this unprecedented change, what exactly should businesses be doing next?

What our insight and experience has shown us is that when there are unknown factors, unanswered questions and unclear timelines, businesses should:



03. LEAD BY THINKING STRATEGICALLY

THINK STRATEGICALLY...

and be purposeful – but not just because it is best for the brand and business, but because it is best for the economy, society and the planet as a whole.

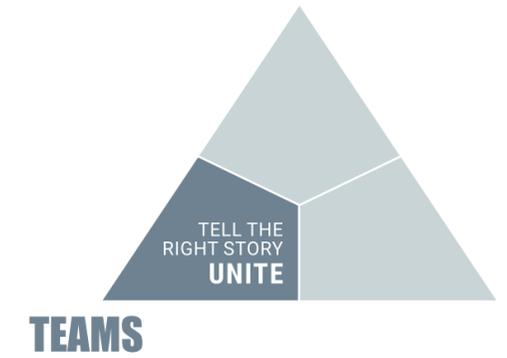


03. UNITE BY TELLING THE RIGHT STORY

THINK STRATEGICALLY...

TELL THE RIGHT STORY...

and be empathetic – use clarity to cut through and meaningful stories to resonate with audiences in the right way, whilst staying true the brand.



VISUALLY ENGAGE AUDIENCES

03. INFLUENCE BY VISUALLY ENGAGING AUDIENCES

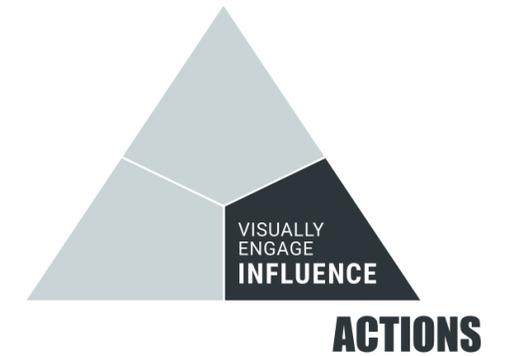
THINK STRATEGICALLY...

TELL THE RIGHT STORY...

VISUALLY ENGAGE AUDIENCES

and be impactful – apply insight to project the brand purpose and messages to the right people, through the right channels, using the right visual language.

CLICK EACH



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04.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

COLLABORATION, PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE & ADDED BENEFITS

04. WHITESTONE INTERNATIONAL **THINK. TELL. VISUALISE.**

Whitestone International is a business and brand development consultancy based in London, with partner offices in New York, Singapore and India.

We're a team of researchers, strategists, creatives and producers with global agency backgrounds and multi-sector experience (B2B and B2C). And based on years of research and over 30 years industry experience, we have pioneered how brands are built by people for people.

We have tracked and anticipated how we see the next normal emerging and being approached – driven by the personal, social and cultural engines of growth. And as we go through this, and into the future, **strategic, narrative and creative originality and alignment** across a business, brand, teams, actions and audiences will deliver continuity, leadership, unity, demand and profitable purpose.

It may not seem it, but now is the time to keep everyone involved, feeling valued, and getting ready to influence **the next normal**.

WE'RE READY TO ACT

We commonly work via video, phone, email, etc., so this is business as usual for us in a way. Our teams are in constant contact and we are working with our clients as normal. Feel free to get in touch to discuss how we can help you through this and beyond...

STRATEGY

We define, clarify and align strategic frameworks to deliver purpose, engagement and growth.

Our strategists are ready.

COMMUNICATIONS

We bring the strategic vision, brand promise and experience to life internally and externally through the core brand narratives and messaging.

Our copywriters are ready.

IDENTITY & BRANDING

We creatively and consistently connect the brand with its audiences to build loyalty, community and trust: personally, socially and culturally.

Our creatives are ready.

04. COLLABORATION FOR PEOPLE-LED BUSINESSES

INDUSTRY SECTORS

AIRLINE
AUTOMOTIVE
ARCHITECTURE
AGRICULTURE
COSMETICS
ENTERTAINMENT
FASHION
FOOD & BEVERAGE
FINANCIAL SERVICES
GOVERNMENTAL
IT
INDUSTRIAL
LEISURE
LUXURY
MASS MEDIA
NGO
PHARMACEUTICALS
RETAIL
SPORTS
TECHNOLOGY
UTILITIES

We support organisations in a variety of industry sectors through strategic change that is internally-driven, externally supported and audience-focussed to enable them to **leverage knowledge and talent to fast-track business, social and cultural outcomes.**

In the face of adversity and physical distance, many businesses, brands and people are striving to become more socially connected and innovative than before.

By engaging teams in the brand and actions, we can not only focus your proposition and align your strategies, but can also strengthen your position as a people-led business that is collaborative, connected and aware of cultural dynamics.

COLLABORATIVE BRAND BUILDING THAT DRIVES UNITY, BUY-IN, CLARITY & ALIGNMENT TO MOVE FORWARD CONFIDENTLY.

- Instil a sense of purpose that empowers internal teams, boosts morale and ignites innovation and growth
- Develop a stronger, high-performance culture by gaining unity and a sense of ownership and pride in the brand platform and initiatives
- Demonstrate senior leadership and strategic alignment across an inclusive process and confident road map
- Energise your workforce in a purpose that will enrich their working lives and encourage recruitment and retention of talent

04. THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

We focus the right resources to address specific priorities and combine the experience of your teams with our extensive insight and expertise. All possible via remote working practices, our approach provides critical insights into key challenges and growth levers, and delivers an action and outcome based programme to equip your organisation to move forward into the next normal:

- **Identifying market & customer-based needs** using research, online focus groups, social listening, analytics, tracking and competitor analysis
- **Leveraging internal knowledge via video and team channels**, including individual management interviews, team brainstorms, online employee surveys and working sessions with steering groups and consultants
- **Using an adaptable modular approach to build your brand steadily**, integrating purpose sessions with practical alignment principles, new expression guidance and internalisation processes
- **Capitalising on new practices and social and cultural languages**, with video chat, user generated content, social and environmental consciousness and a renewed human spirit all becoming part of the next normal

**DELIVERING STRATEGIC & ADAPTIVE CHANGE THAT IS
INTERNALLY DRIVEN
EXTERNALLY SUPPORTED
AUDIENCE FOCUSSED.**

04. A WORLD OF ADDED BENEFITS

By working collaboratively and leveraging the knowledge of internal teams and our expertise, businesses can adapt and move into the next normal confident that they can lead, unite and influence, whilst:

- Positioning to respond to a world of flux and innovation
- Strengthening purpose to tackle change and reflect social and cultural shifts
- Building trust amongst internal and external audiences
- Delivering strategic change and cut through to compete more effectively in times of recession
- Empowering teams and realigning internal practices and resources
- Preparing for future growth or regrowth across your business

Always consider and apply the power of brands, teams and actions when asking yourself:

THE NEXT NORMAL:
BUSINESSES & BRANDS BUILT
ON AUDIENCE VALUE DRIVE
DEMAND & DELIVER GREATER
SOCIAL & COMMERCIAL VALUE

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