

3 lessons brands can embrace to survive in a post-Covid-19 world

By Adam Byars

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Jeff Bezos' view on change is that we should focus on the things we can control versus those we can't predict.



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Given the unprecedented and completely unpredicted crisis the world currently finds itself in, these words have never been more pertinent. As part of a leadership team, I understand that unless we can embrace them and focus on what we can control, there are no guarantees that our business, our team and our client relationships will make it through Covid-19 ready and able to adapt to a new world order.

These are the lessons learnt about what we can control in a way that adds value and matters to our business, people and clients.

1. Stay true to your purpose

Every business has a purpose. Now is the time to review whether every action you take speaks to that purpose. Our role is to help brands create value for their customers, and that can only be achieved when purpose and meaning are aligned, so thankfully this is a concept we are very familiar with. We built our model based on what we stand for, and then gave it a name: we are the Make It Mean Something company. This gives us a lens to review every decision we make and every action we take.

I have always believed that every idea must solve a cultural tension in the world today, and that when you can do that, you can become a purpose-led brand. Covid-19 is putting brands and what they stand for under the microscope. Only purpose-led brands that are relevant will survive. If I've learnt anything over the past few weeks, it's that our purpose has given our team a clear direction to follow when everything else is so uncertain.

Advice for brands: When you build your brand around a core value that both your team and customers can relate to, you can continue to uphold it in a time of crisis, when everyone needs a clear direction to follow.

2. Focus on what matters

As a business, not everything we did pre-Covid-19 is still relevant, to our people or our clients. As a leadership team we've taken a step back, critically evaluated our business and asked some tough questions, including how resilient our culture really is and how effective our Creative Product is. We're already making changes as a result, and I believe that every business should be doing the same.

One of our behavioural principles is that "everything now matters," and we evaluate everything through this value. We cannot control Covid-19, but we can control how we are reacting to it.

Ask the question: how can we help? How do we apply our skills to the country at large? How can we contribute to solving the world's shortages related to needs? We've launched the [How You Can Help website](#) to reach communities across South Africa, matching would-be volunteers with donors, and we're focusing on filtering relevant information so that we can share it with our broader communities using [a Covid-19 tracker app](#).

Finally, we're brainstorming and workshopping key initiatives that both the agency and our clients can play a role in.

Advice for brands: Now is the time to cut away anything that isn't directly relevant to the new reality that consumers and businesses are experiencing. We need to authentically care about each other and look to where we can add real value.

3. Change your point of view

Post lockdown it's important to know that things won't be the same. Ways of working, sanitising, public health and safety, and visiting public places are just some of the things that will be different. The future is still being written, and it could take months or even up to a year to establish a new normal. The only thing we know for certain is that we won't go back to the way things were.

We can allow this knowledge to paralyse us with fear and anxiety, or we can change our point of view and learn to assess and adapt based on new information. This ability is within our power – each and every one of us.

We've already seen that the focus, determination and actionable outputs that we've put in place are helping our people and our clients to weather this storm, but step one was accepting that we needed to change in the first place.

Advice for brands: We can't sit around waiting for everything to return to normal. The world has changed. Embracing this fact will allow brands to respond to new needs and information quickly and effectively. Focus on what you can control – not what you can't predict. And remember, the future has always been unknown, we just weren't so starkly aware of this fact before now.

ABOUT ADAM BYARS

Adam is an experienced businessman in the creative industry with a demonstrated history of working both locally and internationally in the marketing and branding industry, building key customer engagement experience in my early years on both brand and trade with BAT SA before switching to agency...

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