HOW TO GUIDE:
PR & COMMUNICATIONS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

EDELMAN

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The Covid-19 pandemic is impacting organisations of all sizes and sectors – operationally, financially and by threatening the mental and physical wellbeing of employees. Effective communications are key to navigating this crisis. From updating colleagues to setting up a coronavirus taskforce, below you will find practical guidance on how to prepare for and overcome the PR and communications challenges you face, both now and in the future.

1. **Be authentic.** The way your organisation responds to the coronavirus crisis should feel authentic. Whether communicating internally or externally, ensure what you say and how you say it reflects the values at the heart of your business and culture. To promote consistency and clarity, you should also identify a core group of spokespeople with the credibility, expertise and confidence to communicate on behalf of the organisation.

2. **Be transparent.** Acknowledge your responsibilities to employees, customers and public health. That means addressing what you do know, recognising what you do not and encouraging colleagues to follow public health advice at all times. Be honest about the actions you are taking and clear when you need to make changes in line with the rapidly evolving situation.

3. **Update regularly.** At a time when many of your people will find themselves working in isolation, commit to providing regular updates from leadership. Stick to the cadence of updates you have promised and, ideally, use more than one platform to make them, such as the company intranet, internal social media platforms and email. Encourage employees to talk regularly with each other too, wherever possible by video conferencing to promote more face-to-face interactions.

4. **Deal in facts.** When discussing the evolving threat posed by Covid-19, only share details and advice from credible sources, like the World Health Organization or NHS. Unless you are a healthcare organisation actively working on coronavirus, avoid communicating medical information on behalf of public health experts, instead pointing people towards these credible sources' own information platforms. Never speculate or share unqualified commentary.

5. **Prioritise colleagues.** Your employees will be experiencing considerable concerns around health, safety, job security and balancing their work life with their family's needs. Make your people your priority, providing regular opportunities for colleagues to ask questions while proactively addressing their concerns. This includes being aware of and responsive to external policy announcements that may affect them, such as school closures.

6. **Set up a taskforce.** Establish an internal task force to oversee crisis preparedness, response and business continuity efforts. This should include representatives from across the organisation, including executive leadership, communications, HR, finance, facilities, operations, sales and legal. The taskforce should be empowered to take decisive action and ensure all leadership teams are fully aligned on response protocols as well as the content and timing of announcements.

Scenario plan. It is vital to plan a communications strategy in advance for the various potential coronavirus scenarios. Examples are a confirmed case of Covid-19 within your organisation, a larger outbreak in a community where you operate, the cancellations of events, facility shutdowns and product shortages. Your plan should include aligning on messaging, identifying spokespeople and agreeing how and when to disseminate information. You can find advice around communicating with specific audiences in the Edelman Coronavirus Hub.