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From Crisis Response to Preparing for Recovery

A Five Step Communications
Guide to Revival

OVERVIEW

With most communications activity over the past few months across the travel, tourism and business events sectors being built around an immediate response to the pandemic, and mitigation efforts being used to protect visitors and employees, focus is now turning to the long process of recovery.

Our team has been working for several months to position ourselves and our clients for the future. While many communications plans and budgets have been paused or reduced, its vital to maintain a strong voice if brands wish to remain connected with their audience and to keep up to date with rapidly changing consumer needs and expectations.

Leading with a clear voice will show your audience that you are committed to recovery, with an opportunity to position your business and your senior team as leaders, creating an emotional connection which engenders brand loyalty and value.

Pre pandemic, marketing and communications plans could take several months to develop and deploy, but today, in a much faster moving environment, communications need to be far more agile and flexible.

That's why we have used our recognised crisis communications models and strategies to develop a Five Step Guide to Revival, which provides a framework for you to create and deliver the type of content and messages designed to keep conversations going and to build confidence in your business as we look to shape all our futures .

STEP ONE:- OPEN FOR BUSINESS

This might seem a very obvious first step, but in the immediate aftermath of any crisis, it's important to portray a clear message that you are open, at least in the context of what is safe, as that is what both consumer and business audiences are looking for.

You need to be saying very clearly that you are ready to do business. That when they arrive at your hotel, venue, attraction or destination, that they are going to feel comfortable, safe and secure, which provides you with another reason to talk about what they can expect in terms of any new safety protocols or procedures.

From a sales perspective, it also provides an opportunity to talk about any new products and services and also to introduce any special offers or incentives. Using imagery and video content to show you are operating normally, albeit within agreed guidelines, is a simple way of showing that they are welcome.

Example: With London wanting to be clearly seen as friendly to Europe, and still very much part of Europe, post the Brexit vote in 2016, the Mayor of London created the highly successful #LondonIsOpen campaign, designed to send a very clear message to a variety of corporate and consumer audiences that London was very much open for business, and was still a very diverse and welcoming destination.

[Watch The Video Here](#)

STEP TWO:- UNITY MESSAGING

Emotions, not surprisingly, come very much into focus during, and immediately after, a crisis. As a result, emotional communication has a vital role to play in any recovery, as it impacts peoples buying decisions far more than practical ones would normally do.

It's therefore important that you show mutual understanding of any situation through what we refer to as unity messaging. Showing that you as a business recognise the situation, and fully understand what your audience is facing, shows empathy, humanises your brand and provides the much-needed reassurance that you are ready to welcome them back when they are ready to do so.

Understanding has long been considered an important part of how consumers view a brand, with regular surveys highlighting empathy as a significant driver of brand equity, trust and performance. In the case of travel, recent research has shown that consumers in particular will avoid brands who clearly did not show demonstrable empathy during the pandemic.

Example: The team at VisitScotland Business Events, a long standing davies tanner client, quickly recognised that this was going to be a long term issue, and needed to welcome business events back when the time was right. Created from their own homes, they created the simple but effective #ScotlandWillWait message, which has gained widespread acclaim from both within Scotland and Globally.

[Watch The Video Here](#)

STEP THREE:- COLLECTIVE READINESS

The pandemic has shown us that we make greater progress when we work together, and that a show of strength can send a powerful message to those that we need to support us as we work through the period of recovery into one of revival.

The message of collective readiness, also relates to a City's eco-system. This could include airports, restaurants, hotels, venues, caterers and taxi drivers, along with the wider community at large. It says that they are all there for you. That they are clearly motivated by the desire to work as a team to overcome any difficulty, achieve any goal and simply wants to welcome you to their community.

Developing a collective team message, whatever business or place you are in, can support an overall recovery, and can contribute to a formidable narrative that can be used on a variety of channels, especially across video or any image led campaign.

Example: In 2013, just hours after the Boston Marathon bombing, the phrase #BostonStrong began trending on twitter. What began as a simple statement of resolve and unity in the face of terrorism, became a wider message for the City. The message was printed in bold, yellow letters on blue T-shirts, the colours of the Boston Marathon, and went on to raise over \$1 million for the city's fund for victims.

[Watch The Video Here](#)

STEP FOUR:- PRODUCT REINFORCEMENT

A very important lesson in crisis communication, is never to assume. It may seem obvious that your clients and customers know what it is you do, and what you provide, but given the disruption and uncertainty that any crisis will cause, it's likely that they will need some element of reassurance, and in many cases, a reintroduction to the services and/or products you provide, as this may have changed.

Enabling some product reinforcement within your revival plan, also provides you with a further chance to re-engage with your existing audience and connect with those that may not have you on their radar, building a stronger customer base for the future.

It's also an opportunity for you to tell people about any new products or services, such as on-site studios or new technology. Most importantly, it provides you the perfect place from which to reinforce your brand values and vision, which may well have changed or evolved over the past few months.

Example: As lockdown began, we worked closely with our client, IBTM, to create a new engagement platform, IBTM Connects. This enabled them to stay connected to existing audiences, who were hungry for content and information while at home, and engage with new audiences, through IBTM Meets, a series of interviews with leading figures from the business events community.

[Watch Ibtm Meets Here](#)

STEP FIVE:- DEMONSTRATE CONFIDENCE


Following any crisis or disaster, it's natural that confidence to travel and return to any kind of normality, will be severely tested. With the current situation, safety is top of mind for everyone as we all begin to look beyond the current situation and into a period of recovery. At this point in the recovery cycle, it's vital that we provide the confidence to enable our clients and guests to do just that, and to consider what level of assurances they need to take that next step to recovery.

In a time of uncertainty, we all tend to put our faith in those brands that we trust. Assuming you have a solid or recognisable brand, trust in that brand should be highly valuable, as it's likely that brand trust will extend to safety, health and hygiene.

It's also important that we remain engaged with our audiences and provide as much information as possible. Several recent surveys suggest that future travel buying decisions will be based on the level and quality of communications they receive from a hotel, venue, airline or destination.

Example: Our client, Ascott Limited, created a short video to launch their new safety and hygiene brand, Ascott Cares, which showed what guests could expect when visiting one of their properties. The fact that video was led and introduced by their managing director, gave further confidence in the product.

[Watch The Video Here](#)

The logo for Davies Tanner, featuring the words "davies" and "tanner" stacked vertically in a light blue, lowercase, sans-serif font, set against a dark blue rounded rectangular background.

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SUPPORTING YOU THROUGH RECOVERY TO REVIVAL

davies tanner is the leading independent PR and brand communications agency for the business events, travel and tourism sector.

As you look towards a new future, talk to us to find out how we are helping dozens of brands navigate their way from recovery to revival and how we could help you do the same.

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