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BI WORLDWIDE

COVID-19 has presented unique challenges to brands, requiring many to rethink the way they interact with and get noticed by consumers.

Many brands were heading into 2020 with a robust experiential marketing calendar including sponsorships at sporting events, activations at concerts and booths at trade shows that were all quickly cancelled. Our worlds became virtual overnight and shortly after that, virtual fatigue set in.

How does a brand create an experience that is memorable, relevant and safe during these times? Our team did a deep dive into what is resonating with consumers and brands right now. Some things to consider: **How will consumers want to connect? Where will they want to connect? How can brands help people? What do they need?** These questions led to a series of ideas and best practices that can help brands safely connect with their target audiences.

1. COVID-friendly footprints:

If an in-person interaction is needed, you can design roadshows that are appointment-based and incorporate social distancing, plexiglass dividers and voice-activated engagements where the content can change quickly on digital signage to speak to different audiences and brands. This is a way to own the experience and not compete for mind share like you would have in a tradeshow environment.

2. Influential network experiences:

Brands can deliver powerful brand messages, samples and offers by tapping into networks of college, sorority, fraternity, health, wellness, fitness and pet influencers nationally. Messages can be delivered with a powerful recommendation from a trusted influencer, creating a credible connection with your audience. This can be a highly-targeted approach by identifying the network that best matches your audience and geotargeting their locations.

3. Digital and virtual:

There are many ways to connect with your audience digitally and virtually but it's important to remember digital fatigue is real. Create something unique, memorable and valuable for your audience and they will be more likely to engage. For example, consider creating a custom digital storytelling mural populated with digital selfies of your audience. (Extend the experience by creating a pop-up brand shop that showcases the mural on merchandise items like t-shirts, reusable grocery bags and journals). Or provide access to a once-in-a-lifetime virtual experience by tapping into talent like a celebrity chef, band or mentalist. Out-of-the-box ideas for brand engagements will generate attention and excitement.



4. Curated kits:

In this mostly virtual world, consumers crave something tangible more than ever. Curated kits can stand alone or support a virtual event. For example, if you are promoting a cooking experience for a food brand, you may engage a chef to assist in curating a custom kit filled with spices, recipe cards and kitchen utensils that allows consumers to participate during the event. This takes your experience from passive to active.

5. Field trips:

This falls under the category of what people need right now. It is challenging to work from home, home school, care for family members and think up safe, fun weekend experiences for your family. Field trips can create special moments for families to get out of their home in a safe way to be in nature while learning fun facts about where they are. These field trips can be accompanied by kits that set them up for their best field trip ever.

6. E-commerce partnerships:

Consumers are shopping online and having packages delivered to their home more than ever. What if you could partner with retailers that match your brand's target audience and have the opportunity to add custom inserts, samples and relevant swag in these packages that get delivered right to your target audience's home? And as an added bonus, since the packages are something the consumer ordered, the open rate is 100%, which is very different than unsolicited direct mail.

The pandemic doesn't need to put a stop to experiential marketing. It just takes a little out-of-the-box thinking and a focus on the particular goals you'd like to achieve to come up with a new way of bringing your brand to consumers.

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