In times of immense strain and crisis our truest colors often show through. As the entire globe faces the unprecedented and catastrophic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, we’ve seen moments of brightness during a fog of immense sadness and uncertainty.

This is the time when many things will be put to the test, including how business responds. In this moment of global need, we will remember those companies that stood tall, acted quickly and with humanity. We will also remember those that did not. For this is a moment when legacies will be made - and when those true colors will bleed to the surface.

How we act and respond will also remain a beacon for how to conduct business far into the future. The lens we look through today shows that business must act in service to individuals, broader society and the environment, and this must remain the lens moving forward. In perpetuity. Because the heightened expectations for business to be a leader, solution provider and force for good will not fade as the pandemic does.

At Porter Novelli we steadfastly believe in the power of Find. Live. Tell. For a company cannot live with Purpose without first finding and understanding its unique ambition. And a company certainly cannot tell its Purpose to the world without first living it. In this time when decisions must be made in a blink of an eye that could impact hundreds of thousands of employees and millions in communities around the world, companies must have a North Star to guide them. That North Star, that Purpose, acts as a filter through which leaders and businesses can make the right decision the easy one, because an organization understands at an innate level where its values and priorities lie.

Now more than ever before is the moment companies must Live their Purpose. This is about action. How will your organization respond and how will it prioritize stakeholders? In what way will it support employees? What products, services and resources can be redeployed in service of individuals and communities? How will it contribute to society in an authentic and powerful way?

To uncover American expectations of companies and when, if and how they should act, we deployed the PN VIEW COVID-19 Tracker. We hope the data and insights forthcoming will be of value to you and your teams as we collectively navigate the current crisis and work toward a new norm.

Now more than ever, we are in this together.

David Bentley, Chief Executive Officer
Looking to companies in times of crisis

In these unprecedented times, Americans view companies as critical stakeholders not only in current relief efforts but more long-term results. In fact, a third of Americans have more faith in business to create solutions to address the coronavirus pandemic than other entities including government and nonprofits. Individuals are recognizing the amazing power of business to get things done — with the skill, acumen, speed and power.

34% Have more faith in business to solve the coronavirus pandemic than other entities

45% Believe companies can create COVID-19 solutions faster/better than government
During this time, the majority of Americans believe companies need to take a community-first, not shareholder-first approach. More than three-quarters of individuals say companies must make decisions that are in the broader interest of the community. After all, we’re all in this together.

“During these uncertain times, the natural tendency is to pull back, but when presented with a choice, choose action. Do good, follow your instincts and the right type of attention will follow.”

Justin O’Neill, SVP, Innovation & Impact
Making or breaking reputation

The actions a company takes today will have staying power in the minds of consumers far beyond when the coronavirus crisis has subsided. Americans are keeping a keen eye on which businesses are stepping up and which ones are tripping up. These moments will impact Americans’ perceptions of organizations in the future — for better or for worse.

“Public health is, and needs to be, the number one consideration as we navigate this crisis. It sounds obvious to many, but there is a budding tension — particularly in the U.S. — between the economy and our communities, especially our most vulnerable populations. We know the decisions companies make now will define them well after this pandemic has passed.”

Kate Cusick, Chief Marketing Officer

Feel how companies act now will impact their perceptions in the future

75%
Making or breaking reputation

“During this hyper-intense moment in our world, every decision we make as leaders demonstrates our character. Whether it’s the communications we prioritize for external consumption or the maneuvers made to care for our people internally, character is on full display. Remember that with each action you take, because even if you don’t, you can be assured that others will.”

Dwayna Haley, SVP, Reputation

- **75%**
  - Say they will remember which companies stepped up to provide coronavirus support when this is all over

- **73%**
  - Will remember the companies that made bad decisions during the coronavirus pandemic

- **71%**
  - Say if they learned of a company’s irresponsible or deceptive business practices during the coronavirus pandemic, they would stop buying its products/services
Making or breaking reputation

Consistent with actions in support of Purpose-driven companies in previous studies, Americans are willing to reward companies they believe appropriately stepped up to provide coronavirus support or relief efforts — whether through increased loyalty or trust, a higher propensity to purchase or even considering this company as a more attractive place to work or invest.

WHEN AMERICANS LEARN OF COMPANIES’ COVID-19-SPECIFIC RESPONSES, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

- 73% trust
- 74% be loyal
- 73% purchase
- 63% work for
- 51% invest
Communications in the time of COVID-19

Americans want to know what companies are doing to support coronavirus relief efforts — but companies must be cautious to not seem self-promotional or self-congratulatory. In fact, nearly half of Americans (48%) question the sincerity of these efforts. Companies should consider leveraging third-party relationships to ensure even efforts with the best intentions are deemed authentic in the eyes of consumers.

71%

Feel better about companies that publicly announce what they’re doing
Communications in the time of COVID-19

“When pivoting your strategies, plans and activations to account for this (temporary) new normal, please do not lose sight of your longer term vision. Your clients will appreciate the fact you are keeping one eye on a post-COVID-19 world. The communications landscape may be different, and we need to be ready.”

Ravi Sunnak, EVP, Sustainable Development Goals

Are more likely to believe a company’s coronavirus support efforts are authentic if they hear about it from a third-party source

Question the sincerity of some companies’ coronavirus support efforts

Believe companies that are promoting products/services not related to coronavirus efforts look self-serving or uncaring
Communications in the time of COVID-19

Although Americans want to hear the specific programs, policies and commitments companies are producing related to COVID-19, they also feel overall coronavirus communications should be left to other experts. Americans are more likely to trust information about coronavirus when it comes from state government first and foremost, followed by the federal government and media.

### MOST TRUSTED SOURCES FOR CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Government (including departments of health)</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government (including departments of health)</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government (including departments of health)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit Organizations/NGOs</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/Faith-Based Organizations</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employees look to their employers

Employees remain an ever-critical stakeholder as companies navigate the creation of new policies, programs and efforts related to coronavirus. And many companies are getting credit from employees for a job well done — while leaving room for improvement. Nearly two-thirds of employees surveyed believe their company is doing a good job supporting efforts, while four-in-10 think their company should have acted faster. Companies that do well in the eyes of employees stand to benefit moving forward from increased loyalty, pride and feeling inspired on the job.

63% Think their company is doing a good job supporting the community during the coronavirus pandemic

42% Think their company should have acted faster to put new programs/policies in place in response to the coronavirus pandemic
Employees look to their employers

WHEN EMPLOYEES LEARN OF THEIR COMPANIES’ COVID-19-SPECIFIC RESPONSES, THEY ARE:

- **74%** Inspired
- **73%** More loyal
- **78%** Proud
- **72%** More likely to recommend
- **71%** Make me want to get involved

“Reputation can be made or broken at this unprecedented time. Broken by non-substantive claims of help. Made by genuine contributions to be part of the solution. If you’re employee-first, agile, innovative, creative, community-driven and your business has the right expertise, skills, services, products and/or footprint to make a valuable contribution, it’s your time to rise up and address stakeholder needs.”

Fenella Grey, Chair, London
Where Americans give credit

Although this is certainly an “all hands on deck” situation, some industries are getting more credit in the eyes of Americans for their efforts. Health and Wellness, Food and Beverage Services, as well as Pharmaceutical industries topped the list. As the news cycle evolves and more companies provide unique and impactful support, this list may continue to transform.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellness</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Beverage Services</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail/General Merchandise Stores</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and Broadcasting</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and Telecommunications</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel, Transportation and Hospitality</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where Americans give credit

When given unprompted (and open-ended) space to say which companies are doing the best job with relief efforts, a few names continued to rise to the top. In the eyes of consumers, these companies are getting credit for efforts specifically related to coronavirus:

The top rated industry we’re seeing today is unsurprisingly health and wellness, and we expect it to remain at the forefront of Americans’ minds during the pandemic response. However, the prominence of other industries will shift from week to week as impacts from the pandemic spread across markets and supply chains, impacting consumers’ lives in new ways and driving fresh storylines in the media. This will challenge communicators to respond as their industry is affected, and create opportunities to tell positive stories of social impact with each new news cycle.”

Mark Avera, VP, Digital
What companies can do now

With so many competing urgent needs and priorities it can be difficult for a company to determine the best path forward based on its existing assets and available opportunities. Americans believe companies should first protect their employees (both in terms of pay/benefits and health/safety) and then think of how existing products/services can be leveraged to address specific issues.

AMERICANS BELIEVE THESE ARE THE BEST WAYS FOR COMPANIES TO GET INVOLVED IN CORONAVIRUS RELIEF EFFORTS:

- Ensuring that their own employees continue receiving money and benefits: 68%
- Implementing policies to protect the health and safety of their own employees: 68%
- Donating products or services to relief efforts: 68%
- Temporarily eliminating fees or barriers to access for their services: 65%
- Using their buildings/equipment and employee time to aid in relief efforts: 56%
- Donating money to relief efforts: 54%
- Providing information or opportunities (like an online class) that help us take care of ourselves and stay healthy: 38%
- Using advertising and marketing resources to communicate public health information: 38%
- Conducting business as usual, to ensure continuity of services and normalcy: 19%
- None of these – I don’t think that it is the responsibility of companies to help during the coronavirus pandemic: 4%
What companies can do now

While it is clear Americans look to companies to provide quick solutions and urgent support, it must be done thoughtfully. Below are tips to ensure your program is getting resources in the right hands, able to make the most impact and leans in on authenticity.

**START AND END WITH EMPATHY**

This is an unprecedented time that has surfaced new and complex challenges for individuals, families, communities, business entities, government and more. Keep this in mind with every decision you make and each time you communicate. We are all in this together. Lead with empathy and humanity.

**IDENTIFY THE NEED STATE**

Do a landscape assessment of what needs exist and specific locations that are in need. Understand which items or services are critical to address the most pressing needs. This may change over time as the crisis evolves, so continue to monitor.

**THINK ABOUT HOW YOUR COMPANY’S PRODUCTS/SERVICES/OPERATIONS CAN BE A SOLUTION**

Based on the need state, look to your products, services and assets. Is it a service you can provide? Is philanthropic support most critical now? What products can you manufacture to fill a gap? Is your workforce in a position to safely provide manpower or volunteer activations? Also consider regional needs and your company’s footprint and locations.

**ANTICIPATE WHAT IS REQUIRED TO OPERATIONALIZE**

Think specifics. What does the community you are seeking to impact need to receive your support? Consider engaging experts to understand the unique barriers or challenges to receiving your products, services or assistance. Look at existing partners you have who may make it easier to engage.

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“Has there ever been a time when all of humanity was experiencing the same thing at the same time? Today, brands, governments and NGO’s grappling with the same existential that we, as individuals, are also facing. I am struck by the creativity of humanity — people sharing hopes and fears, as well as silliness. Right now, the best a brand can do is participate in this collective effort. In our Find.Live.Tell. methodology, this moment calls for us to Live. There are examples of heroism everywhere. Trust your sense of humanity and do the next right thing.”

Sandy Skees, EVP, Global Innovation & Impact Practice Lead
What companies can do now

(continued)

CONSIDER HOW TO BE IN IT FOR THE LONG TERM

Although the immediate opportunity may be stemming from a temporary need, by aligning your brand with a particular cause, you are in a sense making a statement of support. Consider what that will mean and require beyond today or even tomorrow.

PROCEED THOUGHTFULLY WHEN PROMOTING

This is not the time to come off as opportunistic, self-serving or self-congratulatory. This is about authentically engaging to serve a need beyond your business. Frame your communications to be a resource and work with partners to share information as needed.

USE PURPOSE AS A PRISM

Although ever more critical now, companies that use Purpose as their North Star will better understand the role they play in society. A strong sense of Purpose will help guide the decisions of the organization and how it coexists with the global community. The choices we make now will be remembered – what do you want your company legacy to be?
Methodology

Porter Novelli fielded a PN View: 360 survey to gather people’s insights regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19). The survey was fielded online using Engine’s online CARAVAN® Omnibus survey between April 1, 2020 to April 3, 2020, and a total sample of 1,004 U.S. general market adults was collected. The data were weighted to U.S. Census population estimates and the margin of error is +/- 3.1% at a 95% confidence level.

About Porter Novelli

Porter Novelli is a global purpose communications consultancy born from the idea that the art of communication can advance society. More than 45 years ago, we opened our doors – and people’s eyes and minds – for brands driven to make a positive impact. Today, we believe that organizations must find, live and tell their purpose in order to thrive. Those companies will motivate action, secure loyalty and encourage advocacy — all in service to a healthier bottom line. Porter Novelli is a part of the Omnicom Public Relations Group.

For more information about this research or for a custom presentation, please contact your account team or marketing@porternovelli.com.
IN A TIME OF CRISIS, AMERICANS LOOK TO COMPANIES FOR HELP
MAKING OR BREAKING REPUTATION
COMMUNICATIONS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19
EMPLOYEES LOOK TO THEIR EMPLOYERS
WHERE AMERICANS GIVE CREDIT
WHAT COMPANIES CAN DO. NOW.