The Coronation of King Charles III and Camilla, Queen Consort

Communications guidance for brands and companies
On September 8, 2022, Queen Elizabeth II died aged 96. She was the longest serving monarch in UK history, having celebrated 70 years on the throne in May 2022.

Seven months later, the coronation of her eldest son King Charles III takes place at Westminster Abbey on the morning of Saturday 6 May. The ceremony, reported to reflect his reforming agenda to reshape the future of the monarchy, will be officiated by Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury (the most senior cleric in the Church of England).

Around 3,000 dignitaries will be invited to the coronation service, compared to the 8,000 guests who came to the Queen's coronation more than 70 years ago. The royal couple will travel from the Palace to Westminster Abbey in a 260-year-old gold carriage, and hundreds of thousands of people are expected to line London's streets for the procession.
As well as representing a slimmed-down and more diverse formal occasion, the coronation celebrations will include a number of community-focused activities:

The Coronation Big Lunch
The Coronation Big Lunch (Sunday 7 May) is spearheaded by the Eden Project and is part of their majesties belief the coronation should be an opportunity for people in the UK to spend time and celebrate with families and communities. It is likely many in the UK will celebrate this in the form of street parties (note, applications to close a street for a party have now closed). More details here.

The Coronation Concert
On Sunday 7 May 2023, a special Coronation Concert will be staged and broadcast live at Windsor Castle by the BBC and BBC Studios. Several thousand pairs of tickets to be made available via public ballot. Alongside established musical celebrities, the Concert will feature the Coronation Choir, created from community and amateur singers from across the United Kingdom including refugees, NHS workers, LGBTQ+ groups and deaf signing choirs.

The Big Help Out
The Big Help Out on Monday 8 May is designed to help people in the UK give something back to their communities. It is part of the royal couple’s vision for a reformed monarchy in the UK. More details here.
Who is attending the Coronation and what is happening across the Commonwealth?

President Biden won’t be in London and Australia is split on President Albanese’s decision to attend. This is what we know so far:

Representatives from the UK Houses of Parliament and the Church, as well as prominent politicians from the Commonwealth and around the world, will be among the attendees.

Confirmations include UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Prince Albert and Princess Charlene of Monaco, and Japan’s Crown Prince Akishino and Crown Princess Kiko. Other world leaders such as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz are likely to be present.

US President Joe Biden, who is Irish American, will not attend. Instead, according to the White House, the President told Charles that the First Lady, Jill Biden, will attend the coronation on his behalf. Biden has reportedly long disapproved of the British monarchy; however White House officials have pointed out that no previous US President has ever attended a British monarch’s Coronation.
Australian President Anthony Albanese will also attend but the coronation has reignited the debate about the prominence of the monarchy in Australia, with heightened discussion about whether Australia should leave the Commonwealth following the Queen’s passing. Albanese has ruled out holding another referendum in his current term, however the country’s recent decision to not feature King Charles on the $5 banknote has sparked controversy.

Albanese has reassured the Australian public that he will be attending, noting that the “Palace requested in particular that there be significant representation from Indigenous Australians as part of the Coronation”.

Celebrations in Canada, meanwhile, will see a ceremony held in Ottawa on the same day as the Coronation to “acknowledge the special relationship His Majesty has had with Canada for over 50 years and celebrate his reign as King of Canada.”
Advice on how to engage

This is one of those occasions when companies and brands can easily be wrongfooted by not sense-checking communications or activations.

Planning an activation? Ten things to consider before you execute:

1. **Consider your brand’s connection.** Consider if your brand has an authentic connection to the occasion. As importantly, think about its relevance…will your audiences care about it?

2. **Check how you are using the Royal Family emblem.** There are strict guidelines around the official logo. Brands in breach of these guidelines could find the Royal Family ordering a recall – not the reputation any company would like.

3. **Think if it is appropriate.** For example, with a monarch committed to sustainability, single-use plastics and throw-away items will feel out of place.

4. **Not everyone will respond in the same way to your content.** Remember that the monarchy continues to be contentious and controversial. Discretion is the appropriate course of action.

5. **Consider how you can involve everyone.** If you are planning a relevant brand activation, try and make it inclusive. For instance, if it is a food offer, consider the ‘alternative coronation’ options so that you are catering for everyone.

6. **Don’t be afraid to commit to your activation - but be prepared.** Consider questions, comments and backlash, and ensure that you have a plan with prepared Q&As and statements. Also - work out your criteria and timing strategy for responding to any questions and criticisms.

7. **Tap into the collective spirit.** Consumers are looking for fun, and appropriately light-hearted and playful campaigns are often seen to perform better than staid, predicable campaigns.

8. **Leave yourself room to be nimble.** Being flexible enough to tap into the mood of memorable coronation moment means that activations will be timely and relevant. But consider first mover advantage – if you’re not first, you’ll have missed the boat.

9. **Don’t post arbitrarily on social.** Not everyone needs to post about the coronation if it’s not relevant.

10. **Tone and context are everything.** Brands with a reputation for being irreverent and playful have more latitude for activations that stretch the boundaries.
How are brands making a mark?

Several quintessentially British brands, particularly in food and drink, are launching limited edition products or running specific initiatives to celebrate the coronation.

**Walkers** has released two royal-themed flavours of its Sensations crisps – King Prawn Cocktail and Royal Lamb & Mint

**PIMM’s** has launched a limited-edition bottle with an illustration featuring Buckingham Palace

**Cadbury and Fry** are collaborating with four limited-edition chocolate bars.

Retailers are out in force unveiling decorations for the Coronation, such as **John Lewis’s** coronation bunting, meanwhile **Chesterfield FC** have released coronation-themed editions of their kit in celebration. Expect plenty more novelty items to between now and the weekend’s celebrations.

Finally, **National Express** is encouraging people to travel by coach and helping them plan their journey to London for the Coronation, telling consumers to “leave the driving to us for this historic occasion.”
Employee Communications

While the vast majority of companies in the UK will be observing the holiday, some employees will have different views, and may not wish to follow suit.

This may include people of ethnic minority backgrounds, especially from Commonwealth countries. The passing of Queen Elizabeth II and the coronation of King Charles III are reminders of the Empire to many people in the UK and around the world.

Reasons why there will not be universal celebration include:

• An increase in anti-Monarchist sentiment driven by factors including Prince Andrew and Prince Harry’s recent behaviour.

• The initial plan to include the controversial Koh-i-Noor diamond in the Queen’s crown, regarded by some as a symbol of colonial power and an unwelcome reminder of how the British seized power in India.

• The cost and pomp of the coronation at a time where many people in the country are struggling to make ends meet. Estimates of the cost are up to £100 million, and complaints that the ‘slimmed down’ coronation is a waste of public money have been countered by claims that additional tourism will help stimulate the UK economy.
Some guidelines for employee engagement:

1. If companies have already done so, senior management should clarify with employees whether the company will be acknowledging the bank holiday.

   For those with operations outside in the UK, and specifically in Commonwealth countries, any planned celebrations or festivities should be communicated as early as possible to help employees decide if they want to opt in.

2. If it is practical for the company’s operations, it is worth considering where it is more appropriate for its employee base to take the bank holiday around an alternative national, cultural or religious day with a more social or cultural connection.

3. For those based in London, there could be significant travel disruption due to the thousands of visitors expected over the weekend. Encourage staff to check transport to the office, and demonstrate flexibility and an understanding of the circumstances.
Corporate Response

There is no official expectation of companies and other organisations to commemorate or mark the occasion – there are no protocols relating to the use of flags, for example.

So for businesses, the main question is whether to participate in any voluntary corporate communication activity:

Firstly, ask yourselves whether you need to be saying anything proactive at all. Is there appetite amongst your customers, suppliers or employees to hear about the Royal Family or the coronation?

If the answer is yes, consider using social media to share a simple celebratory or congratulatory message. Be aware that many people in the UK and around the world won’t be celebrating, and be prepared for backlash that may follow in reply to posts. Our general advice is that such comments are best left alone.