

Creativity in Quarantine?

How are brands reacting to the COVID -19 crisis?

Fifth Edition





The wheels of industry need to keep turning. Those wheels are best greased by effective marketing.”

Mark Ritson

As the world rapidly changes, so too are brand responses to connect, support and endure in predominately EQ-driven ways. This is in addition to taking educated guesses on which consumer behaviors will ultimately be short-term ‘scabs’ versus longer-term ‘scars’, depending on what the new ‘normal’ may be in their parts of the world.

This not only means finding ways to support the varying and ever-changing needs of those on the ‘front line’, but also finding ways to help consumers move beyond simply surviving day-to-day chaos, to, ideally, finding ways to help them (and their families, communities, businesses) thrive.

This requires stepping back and reflecting on your own brand and business, including what structural changes need to be made to product and service offerings. Companies must now adapt to front and backend changes impacting both how employees operate and how consumers see your offerings playing a role in their lives.

If there’s one thing we’ve learned in the last week, it’s that it doesn’t matter what type of product you are; every brand is now, or needs to be, a service offering. It’s no longer about simply delivering a cleaning tool, a spice for a particular dish, a chair for a newly-created at-home office, or a beauty product; consumers are reevaluating how, when, where, and why they use nearly every brand and product, while simultaneously looking for creative solutions to new problems COVID-19 has created. we are now, as marketers, all in the service industry when it comes to what we deliver to consumers via our marketing and media tactics.

Eight Supportive Approaches

We've organized this document to break out the approaches we see brands pursue in their reaction to COVID-19 and its impact on everyday life. We felt that these were differentiated enough to provide good stimulus for understanding as well as a jumping-off point to develop your own strategies and ideas.

You'll see the trends highlighted in *orange* that are new or have evolved with the rapidly changing times, along with our coverage of them.

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01 Supporting *the frontline*

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Supporting *the frontline*

Much of the work seen is designed to support workers on the front-line (e.g. medical providers, health and safety workers and those putting themselves at risk to help others), including companies offering discounted or free products/services, as well as supporting them physically, mentally and emotionally however possible. Many brands are supporting those on the front-line in facets of their lives we don't always see, such as personal milestones (e.g. marriage, graduation).

One thing we noticed this week is that brands now better understand that this is a long game; those on the front line, be they nurses, doctors, fire fighters, policemen, delivery workers, grocery store cashiers, etc., are committed to the long haul. While there are obvious immediate needs like sufficient masks, gloves, etc., it's about finding ways to provide moments of respite, be it through surprise and delight or simply providing a distraction.

Hershey's & DC Comics

Partnering with DC Comics, the confectionary brand Hershey's is launching Super Hero Milk Chocolate bars, with the first product going to front-line workers as "a small gesture for their heroic efforts during these unprecedented times." Featuring the font, imagery and symbols of DC's Wonder Woman, Batman and Superman characters, the Super Hero Hershey's Milk Chocolate bars are being sent to bring a smile and a treat to fire houses, police stations and hospitals across the U.S.

The bars are available to the general public in July (even though the the next Wonder Woman movie has been delayed from it's original June premier date).





02 Repositioning

productivity

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Repositioning *productivity*

Right now companies and brands are seeking out ways to optimize efficiencies and productivity, in order to support both those on the front line, and their own businesses longer term.

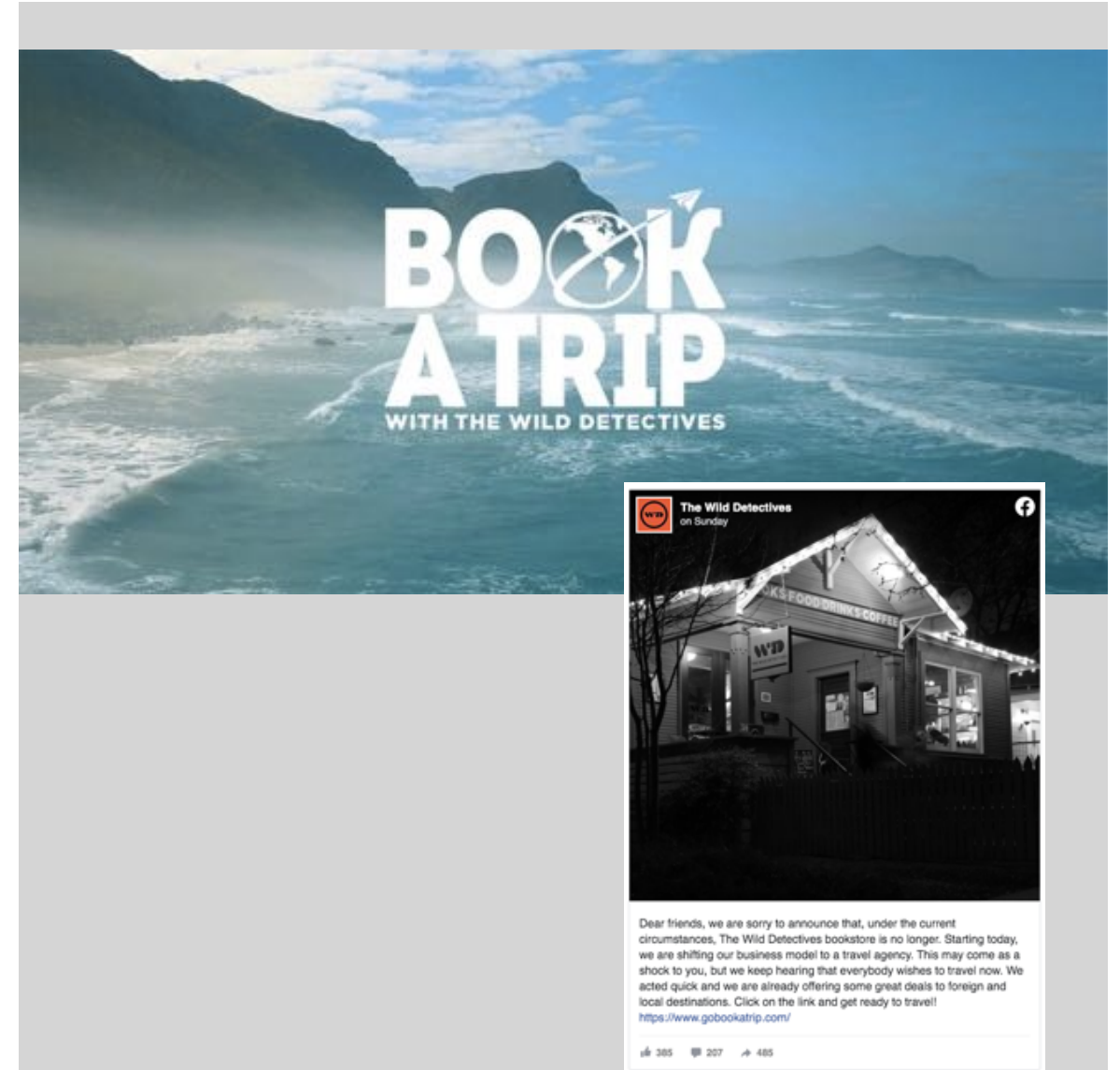
When it comes to brand productivity, it's about stepping back and reevaluating how businesses are run, including where the strains on the supply chain are, evaluating employees' roles, determining what customer service needs to pivot to, etc., resulting in some brands creating changes to entire manufacturing, commerce and overall company infrastructures.

We're seeing companies change how they do businesses – both on the front and back end – to adjust to changing needs and uncertain times. The result is a lot of guesses as to what longer term consumer behavioral scabs will be, and a lot of creativity in leveraging their workforce.

The Wild Detectives

Proving that human creativity beats technology, the Texas bookstore's attempt to pivot from a bricks & mortar to an online business was done with a creative twist. Building on previous marketing strategies that positioned its books as travel expeditions, the store built the 'Book A Trip' website, which, when you first see it, looks like an actual travel booking site. However, when searching for destinations, the results turn up books that were written in the city searched instead of ticket pricing.

When they announced on social media they were launching a travel agency, their fans were confused; the buzz around the announcement, and the subsequent conversation driven by uncovering the website's true offerings, is a creative way of repositioning your services despite offering the same product.



Clear Electron & Ohishiya

Sometimes one company's problem is an issue, but two companies' problems is a solution. Clear Electron makes natural antibacterial agents needed for hand sanitizers, while Ohishiya manufactures and refills fish-shaped to-go soy sauce containers, but currently lacked consumer demand for their service. Seeking creative solutions, the two companies joined forces for #SafeHandFish, utilizing the soy sauce containers for hand sanitizer. Offered free of charge to delivery businesses and restaurants currently operating, the goal is to help quickly sterilize on the go while providing both companies a solution to their business struggles.



De Leckere

Whether it's a date night activity or just a way to try something new with friends, tastings (i.e. wine, cheese, beer, etc.) have historically been a social activity that allows you to learn something new while socializing. However, due to stay-in-place and social distancing measures, communal activities like this have been mostly put on hold, impacting businesses who relied on those live events and foot traffic.

Dutch brewery De Leckere is finding ways to work around safety protocols via virtual beer tastings. The Beer & Bite package offerings bottles of beer, as well as snacks, that can be delivered to a participants home, with the actual virtual tasting happening online live at 7PM on Fridays. It's a great way to create new rituals, a sense of consistency, and bring a new activity into the home.





03 Aiding *the vulnerable*

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Aiding *the vulnerable*

Some brands are focusing on helping those consumers who are most immediately vulnerable to the effects of the crisis, be it someone who is immunocompromised or elderly, find solutions to everyday struggles (e.g. securing groceries, maintaining their health routines, etc.).

We're also seeing an emphasis on helping people financially whose livelihoods are at risk, particularly small businesses and those in at-risk professions, recognizing the reverberating impact that COVID-19 has on local economy and culture.

More brands are reflecting on who their consumers are, what their true needs may be (both immediate and longer term) and finding novel ways to support them in these trying times.

College H.U.N.K.S. Hauling Junk & Moving

Recognizing the rise in domestic violence cases during lockdown, the moving company College Hunks Hauling Junk and Moving (considered an essential business at time of publication) has offered to move victims to safer locations. Working with local shelters across their 135 franchise locations throughout the U.S., the company is working with those in need and helping with the transition process into safer living spaces.

Aligning with the brand belief of #We'reAllInThisTogether, the company is putting its effort where its marketing is, working to support those in potentially life or death situations seek shelter & safety.



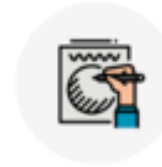
Happy Letters

For those older and living alone or in nursing homes, being isolated can be exceptionally lonely. Happy Letters is a platform designed to soften that, offering people the chance to draft letters or drawings online and send them to elderly people, with over 500 letters sent across 4 countries to date. Users can also list a local nursing home to be included.

It's a simple, seamless way to create connections both on and offline for those who are separated from friends, family and those they usually rely on for human contact day-to-day.



See how it works



**Draw or write
your letter**

Write your letter, then copy it to our form, upload your drawing as well.



**Upload it on
Happy Letters**

Fill in the form and complete all fields. Hit Send and your letter is ready to go 🙌



**Your Happy recipient
receive his or her letter**

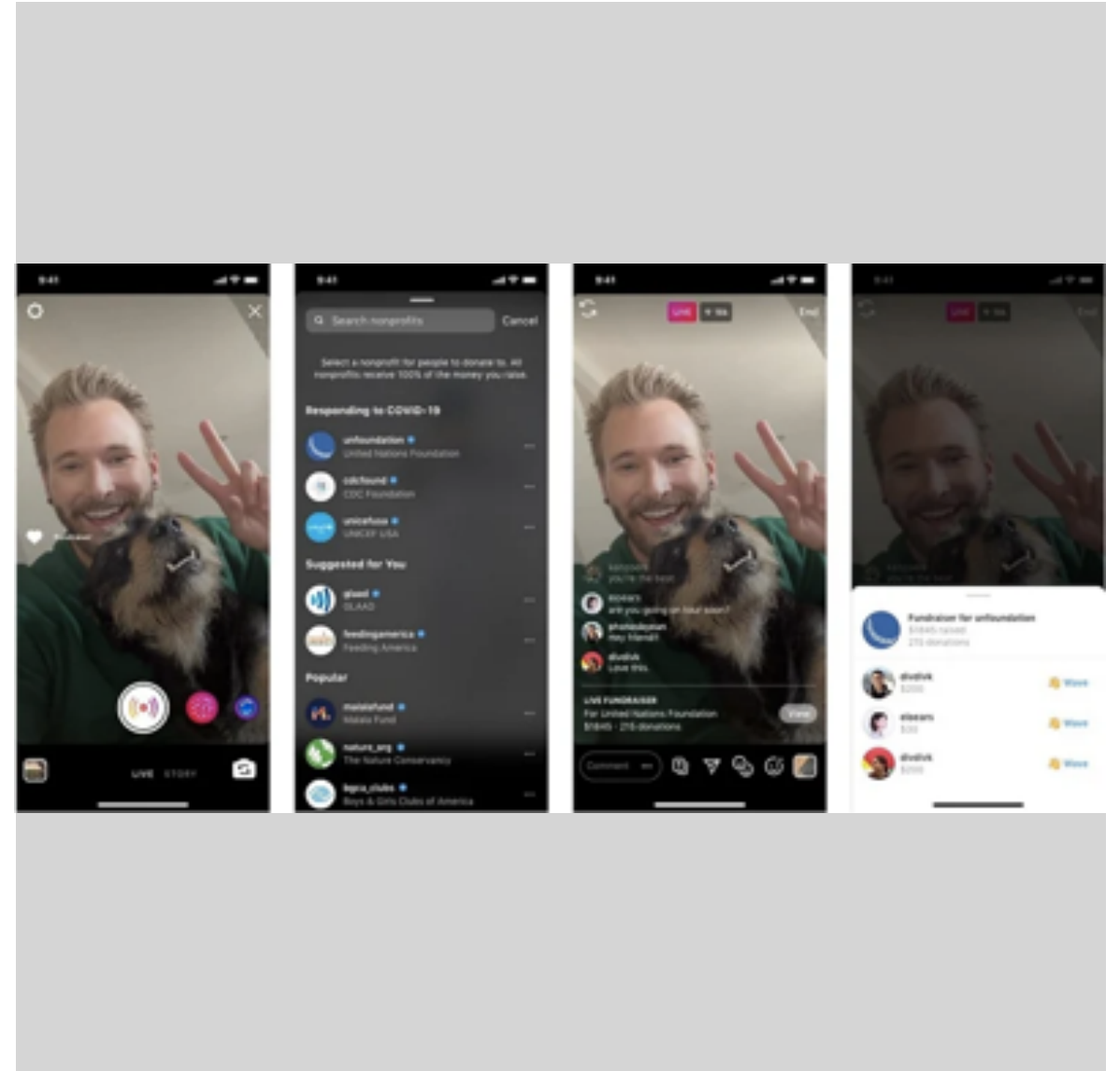
Our recipients, in a network of nursing homes, receive your lovely note.



Facebook

As people find ways to give back, raise funds and support those in need, Facebook has added COVID-19-dedicated fundraising features to both Facebook (to enable business owners to create personal fundraisers) and Instagram (to enable Instagram Live users to raise funds during an Instagram Live – comparable to a telethon). Talk of social marketing has been around for years.

At a time when struggles of all types – mental, emotional, physical, financial, etc. – are the norm for most people, building in support as a cornerstone of your product or service offering will only continue to grow in popularity.





04 Amplifying

WHO advice

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Amplifying *WHO advice*

With so many sources for (mis)information, the official advice of the World Health Organization (WHO) often goes ignored or misunderstood. As recommendations change around the world, it's easy to get confused as to what is fact and what is fiction.

We continue to see brands focused on message amplification of WHO's advice to encourage specific behaviors and drive social change that will ideally slow down and flatten the curve of COVID-19.

Given that many of these habits (e.g. social distancing) will continue to be required globally for a long period of time, we're seeing the messaging becoming integrated into future-focused marketing that normalizes these new behaviors and integrates them subtly into brand-driven actions, thereby removing the fear and panic from them.

Resting Risk Face

Wearing masks may help keep you healthy, but it comes with its own set of challenges, including making it harder to identify you via facial recognition software on your smartphone or when friends and family see you. Resting Risk Face is creating fabric respiratory face masks that look like the wearer, which gives the impression the person isn't wearing a mask at all. The company claims the masks are so accurate, they work with smartphones' facial recognition tech.

At a time when people already have apprehension about not feeling themselves or finding ways to stay safe out of the home, offering the chance to make people easier to recognize (by their kids, loved ones, neighbors, friends, etc.) while staying safe provides a utility often overlooked.





05 Carrying on *at home*

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Carrying *on at home*

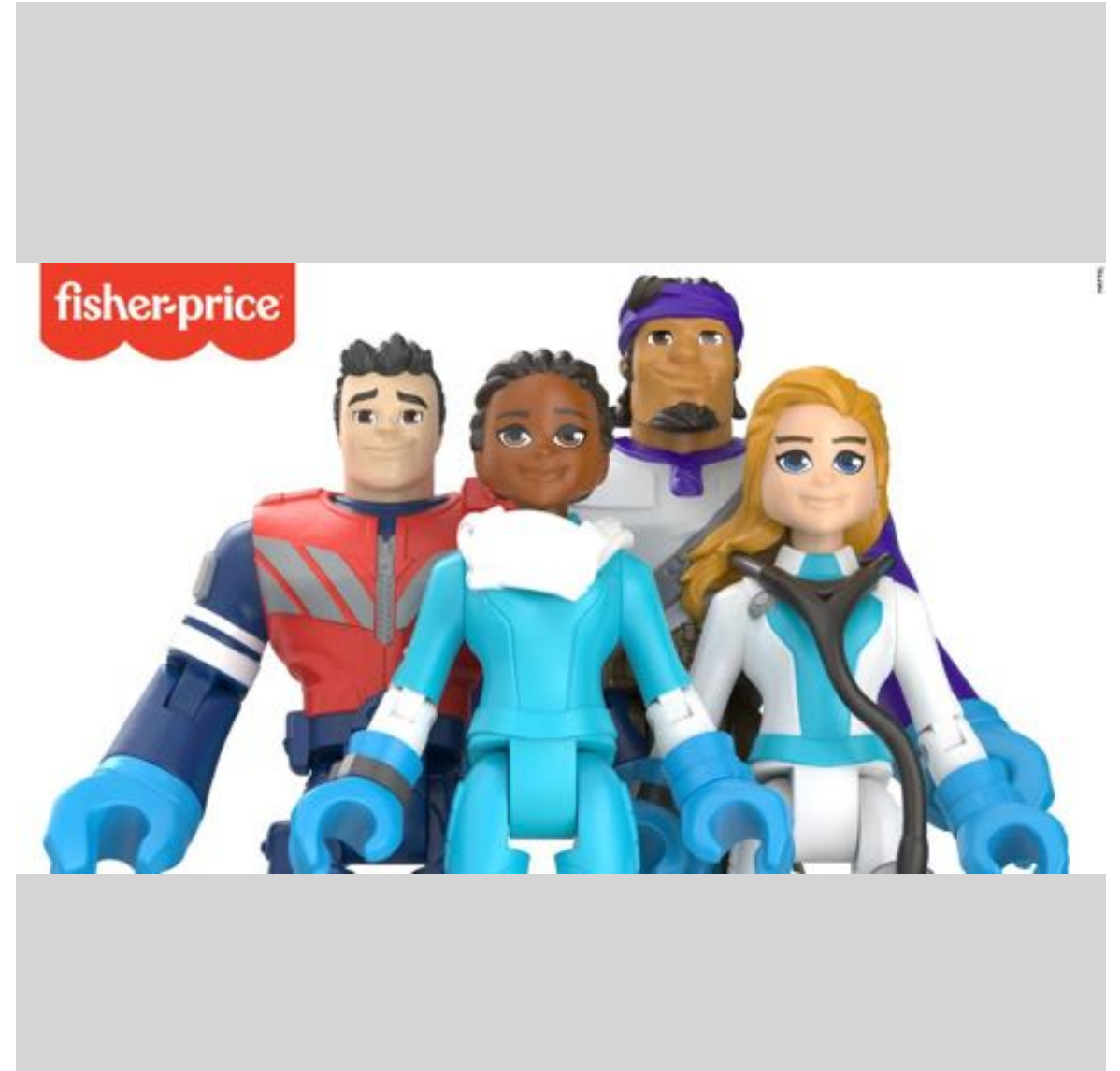
Whether they're adjusting to remote working, attempting to keep kids interested in home schooling, isolating with family, or bunkering down alone for social distancing purposes, most people are spending far more time at home (and indoors) than they ever imagined. Some brands are investing in ways to focus on providing a service, helping to transfer and translate a range of activities into home environments, a critical component of maintaining a sense of normalcy.

As brands and people recognize that these behavioral changes and physical restrictions are most likely for the longer term, we're finding brands are attempting to bring more practical, tactical, and sometimes fun ways of living into the home, attempts to alleviate anxieties and emotional struggles while helping create or maintain a sense of consistency. We are seeing this approach beginning to collide with the next one – Maximizing moments of happiness.

Mattel

The toy company Mattel launched #ThankYouHeroes, a Fisher-Price collection of action figures representing frontline workers, including doctors, nurses, first responders, grocery store workers, and delivery drivers. Available for pre-order, proceeds from the toy sales goes to FirstRespondersFirst, a fund for frontline workers.

Finding ways to recognize “everyday heroes,” who often happen to also be parents or caretakers separated from their children during the crisis for health & safety reasons, brings a sense of fun and comfort to children. It can also enable difficult conversations with children who are learning more about these jobs and their importance, or may not be seeing their parents because they are on the frontlines risking their lives.



Taco Bell

Cinco de Mayo is another annual day that usually includes a shared meal with friends and family. Knowing that securing the ingredients needed is increasingly harder these days, Taco Bell launched an at-home Taco Bar to make celebrating easier, even if it's over video chat. The build-your-own meal kits offer everything needed to get creative and build your own version of Taco Bell dishes, including recipe cards for both food and Taco Bell-inspired drinks.

It's an example of not only recognizing consumer needs dramatically changing in real time, but also the resilience of brands who are willing to test their levels of flexibility in product offerings and services.



Arnott's

In an attempt to ease isolation, Arnott's launched a campaign revealing some of its most favorite business recipes. "Arnott's Big Recipe Release" compliments the recent spike in home baking thanks to stay-in-place orders and families looking for ways to replicate dishes they usually buy or eat out. All recipes have been modified for home cooking, recognizing that certain ingredients may be harder to come by. Until social distancing regulations are lifted, the brand has committed to unlock one business recipe a week, a first in the brand's history.





06 Maximizing moments

that matter

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Maximizing moments

that matter

With uncertainty comes chaos; the best people can do is take it day by day, attempting to seek calm & consistency. We've repositioned "Maximizing Moments Of Happiness" to Maximizing Moments That Matter" as we see brands recognizing that supporting mental, physical and emotional wellbeing is critical during a time when many are more anxious and uncertain than ever, driving unprecedented need for physical and emotional outlets.

These companies have chosen to focus on building positive experiences for consumers, encouraging and equipping them to carve out moments of happiness across the day via physical, emotional and mental relief.

Much of this work brings experiences into the home environment, helping people to build new rituals that can replicate or replace ones lost to the pandemic, offering consistent moments of happiness.

Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU)

Homeschooling is difficult for everyone: the teachers, the students and the parents who have zero training on how to teach. As frustrations and tensions at home mount, Pennsylvania's regional public education agency has launched workshops for parents to educate and onboard them to homeschooling. Utilizing Google Classroom, the sessions are designed to help empower teachers and parents to support their kids' educational experience during already chaotic times to the best of their ability while helping them work through points of friction.





07 Redefining Channel

entertainment

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Redefining channel

entertainment

Brands, both established and emerging, are experimenting with live-streamed virtual events across nearly every platform, making this one of the most dynamic areas of communications right now. This provides a massive opportunity to connect people through outlets both emerging and established, but requires expedited listening, learning and evolving to keep up with consumers & and the competition.

For example, virtual events have more structure to them than traditional live-streaming, allowing consumers to tune-in when they want as well as providing a deeper experience. They will undoubtedly be effective in engaging with audiences and creating digital forums where attendees have the chance to share their own programming and content.

Meanwhile, we're seeing gaming platforms offering live programming alternatives for both professional sport and performing artists, as even established platforms test the boundaries of what's possible (and what consumers want).

We're also seeing traditional content creators and providers push the limits of creation, development and distribution as efforts for future-proofing, growth and following consumers as they test and establish new ways of watching movies, TV shows, concerts, group workouts, comedy shows, and other forms of entertainment they may have invested in previously outside the home.

Chiquita

Chiquita updated their iconic blue banana stickers to offer scannable Spotify codes that unlock Chiquita playlists with uplifting themes (e.g. “feel happy,” “smile workout,” “cook and dance”) and jingle remixes on Spotify. The produce brand also developed special “Golden Banana” stickers that give consumers a way to unlock a branded podcast on Spotify where they listen in for a secret password to gain access to a Chiquita website game. Here they can compete for branded prizes and Spotify Premium subscriptions.

We can’t fixate on doom and gloom forever, and finding ways to create experiences within the spaces we’re confined to is going to be a focus in the coming weeks, just as it was before COVID-19 (albeit marketers previously had many more options for WHERE they created experiential executions).



Finland

Finland's annual May Day celebration in Helsinki may have been canceled due to the pandemic, but the merriment found a way to move online. Working with Zoan, the city created a virtual version of Helsinki that anyone around the world could access, enabling people to join the May Day festivities of a virtual concert and party.

The online version of the mass gathering resulted in 12% of the country watching the event, and, of those attendees, 150,000 weren't just viewers – they actively participated by creating avatars, making it the largest XR (mixed reality) event ever.



L'Oreal

Without high-end studios to shoot new commercials and content, brands are getting creative. Simultaneously, everyone, including celebrities, is encountering the same struggles staying in place provides, including being unable to get to the hair salon to touch up your hair color. Proving that their at-home hair coloring is good enough for a celebrity, L'Oreal Paris' latest ad features its spokesperson Eva Longoria using its Excellence Crème at home on her own hair. Filmed via smartphone in her home, the actress walks viewers through the entire dying process (including showing off her grey hairs), as well as the salon quality results.

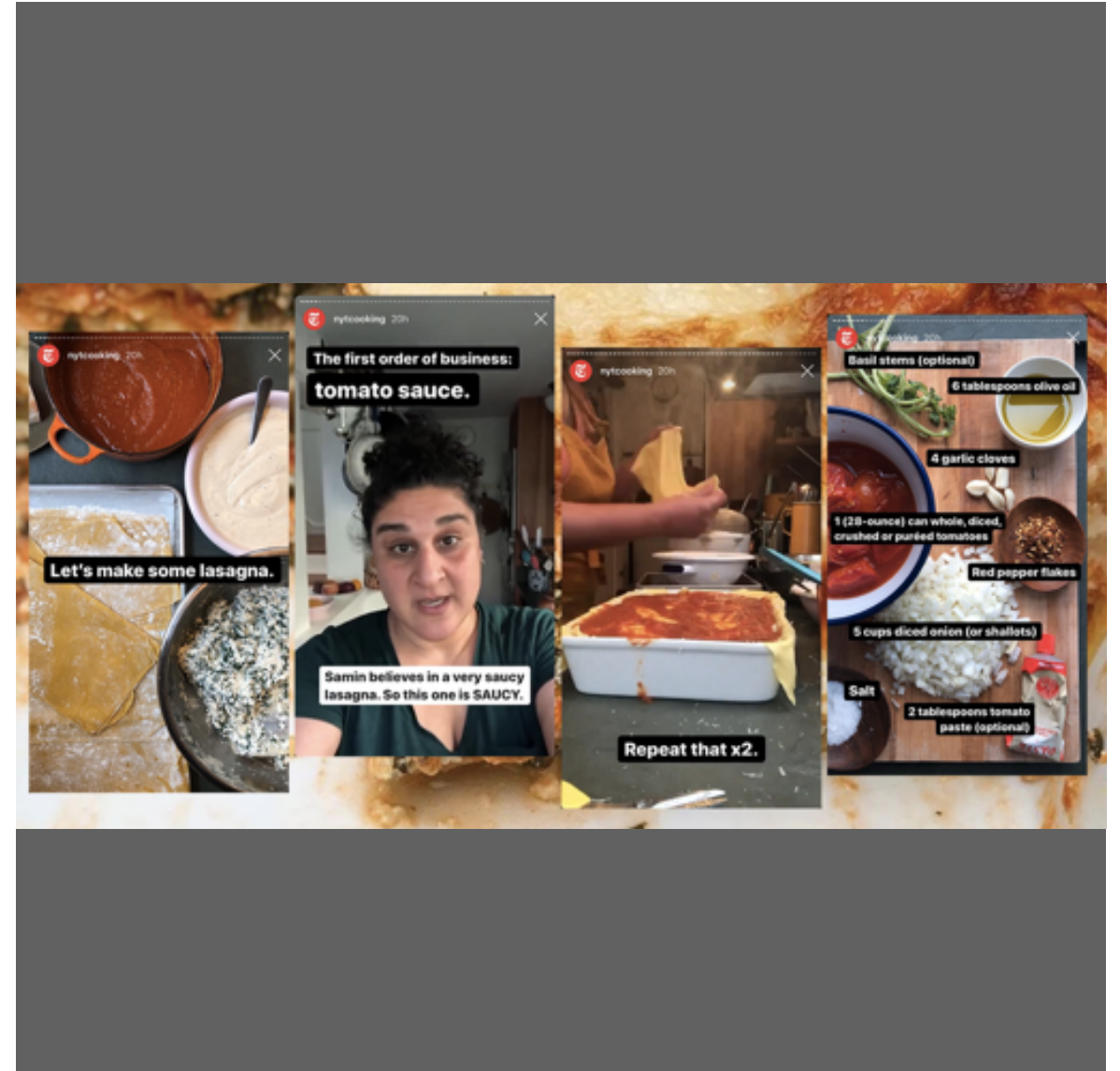
It's an interesting way to not only create new content across platforms and media outlets, but also proof that the product is "worth it."



NY Cooking

As online events increasingly become a cornerstone of COVID-19 marketing, brands are finding unique ways to bring their respective communities together around experiential opportunities that bring the brand into the home and everyday moments of happy. NYT Cooking is tapping into the sorely missed tradition of sharing a meal with friends, utilizing Instagram Live to host virtual dinner parties.

The first one, a lasagna party, was done with *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* author Samin Nosrat, and relies opening up the NYT Cooking vault to share recipes previously behind paywalls. Recognizing that you need to show, not just tell, consumers your value offering in the form of service, it's a way of building bridges between the offering (recipes) and the result (cooking said recipes at home).



YouTube

With plenty of film festivals around the world canceled and left scrambling to figure out how to screen their content and support their content creators, online platforms have become a saving grace for screening.

Recognizing the power of partnership, 20 film festivals, including Cannes, Tribeca, Sundance, and Toronto Film Festival, have partnered with YouTube for 'We Are One: A Global Film Festival'. This 10 day virtual film festival will be free for all viewers via YouTube, offering curated content such as documentaries, short films, movies, comedy, and interviews that were previously scheduled to be shared in-person. Adding a giving back component, 'We Are One' will support WHO and local relief organizations.



Cine Colombia

The theater company Cine Colombia is hosting film screenings on the walls of buildings in various neighborhoods across Bogota, so that those who are staying in their homes can see a new movie on a new (physical platform) via their balconies.

It's a kind way to create a sense of community by giving neighbors an entertainment experience they can share and feel connected by when they cannot physically go to a movie theater.



Club Index

Tapping into the European trend of drive-in performances, the German club Club Index held a drive-in rave with 500 participants (2 people per car, 250 cars allowed maximum). The 'Autodisco' featured Netherlands DJ Devin Wild, and gave locals a chance to engage in their favorite pastimes while abiding by social distancing rules and large event bans.

For those seeing a sense of normalcy or even a compromise that enables them to engage in the activities that make them happy, creative solutions that deliver on both safety and some version of the original experience are great ways for keeping local business going. It's also testing the boundaries of what live events could look like in the future, and providing a short term solve for consumer satisfaction.



Mutua Madrid Open Virtual Pro

While major tournaments are canceled, tennis is finding ways to tap into the growing eSports trend other sports have been testing. In lieu of the 2020 Mutua Madrid Open, the competition transitioned into the Mutua Madrid Open Virtual Pro, featuring ATP and WTA players competing in a digital version of Manolo Santana Stadium via the videogame Tennis World Tour.

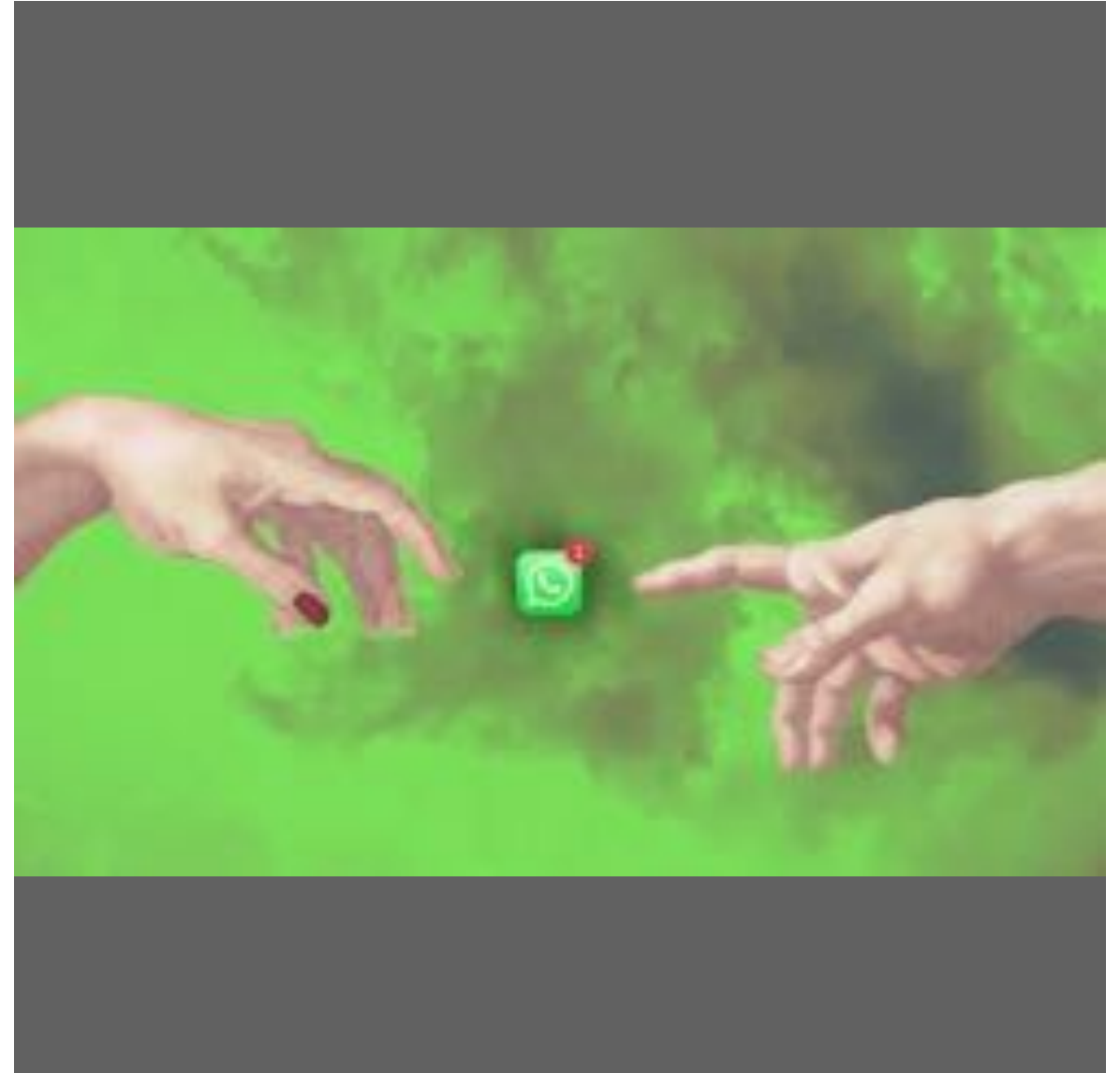
Trading in tennis rackets for gaming consoles, some of the world's top players found a way to connect, engage in tennis-esque sport, and provide viewing entertainment for fans.

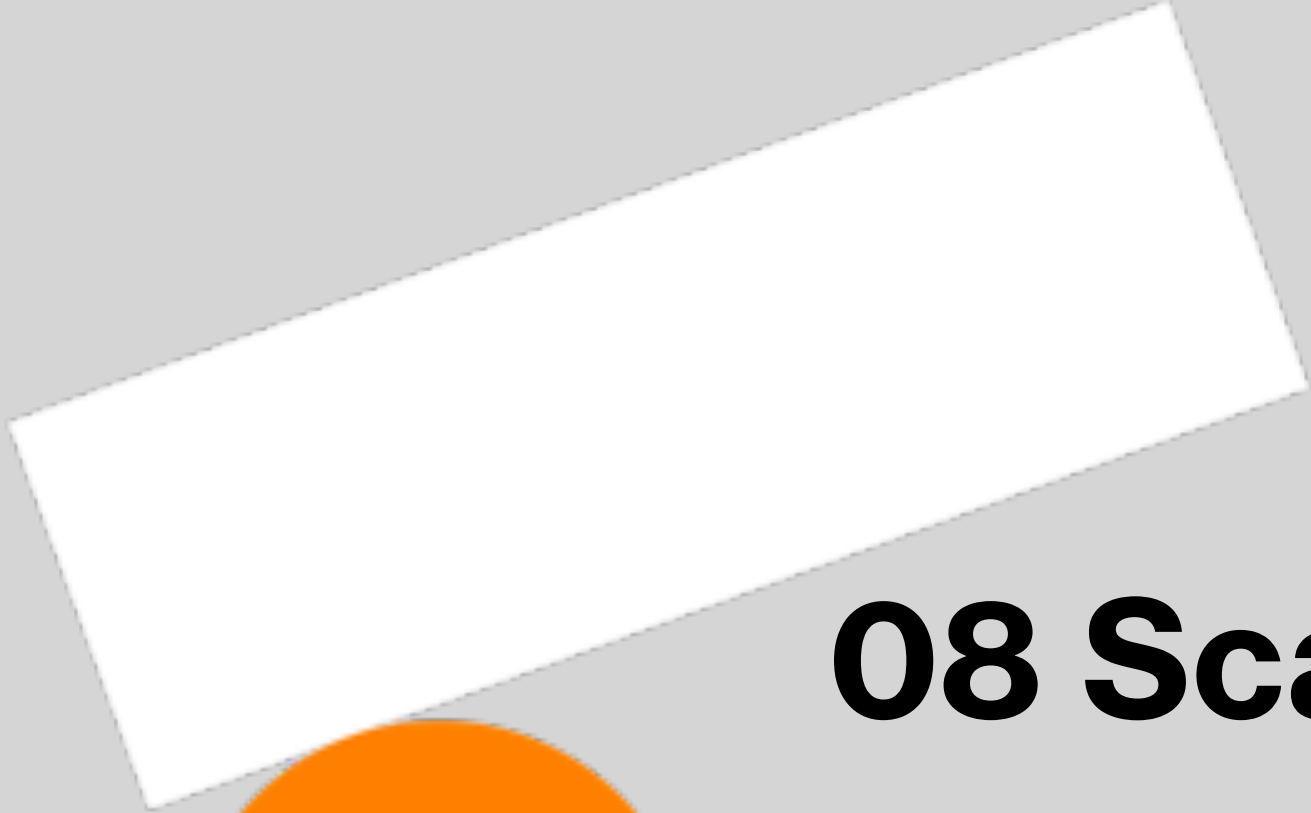


SkaGeN

The Belgium-based theatre collective SkaGeN created a novel way to experience theatre: via WhatsApp. Viewers could enjoy the show 'WatchApp theatre #1: Emmi & Leo' by joining a specific WhatsApp group and 'secretly' reading along the messages Emmi and Leo were sending to each other as the text-based performance played out.

With Broadway, West End and plenty of other theaters closed, and the future of theatre up in the air, this is a creative attempt at finding new solutions for standing problems.





08 Scabs *versus Scars*

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Scabs

versus scars

If you think about all of the ways consumer behaviors have rapidly altered, from the mundane everyday actions and routines being turned upside down to how spending and content consumption is prioritized, there are plenty of continually emerging behaviors both online and offline.

As we move towards whatever the ‘new normal’ is for the coming weeks, months, and even longer-term, which behaviors consumers currently have adopted will fade away in 6-18 months as scabs? And which behaviors will solidify as scars, permanently changed and forever impacting the ways consumers engage with the world (and brands) around them?

While we will not know for sure for a long time, we’re seeing brands attempt to guess what consumer behaviors will be scabs in the near future vs. more permanent scars.

Disney

As brands look for ways to help transition consumers towards whatever the new normal will be, Disney is finding ways to help make that change easier for children. The company launched a new line of face masks, available for pre-order with a June ship date, to benefit charities fighting COVID-19. Bringing its magic to masks, which many kids find uncomfortable or scary, the prints feature Disney, Star Wars, Pixar, and Marvel characters with the hope of making mask wearing a bit more fun.

As a brand based in creating memorable moments for families, it's a smart way of giving back as well as helping families find the magic in what could be everyday moments of friction.



NS

As various cities and countries work to move towards determining how to maintain public health and safety as they come out of lockdown, the Netherlands train company is exploring ways to make social distancing easier during commutes and travel. Testing a slew of initiatives, including covering trains with sticker signs showing spacing and sets, as well as covering seats with foil screens, it provides insight into what the future of travel could look like, and how travel is adapting.





09 Marking *milestones*

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Marking *milestones*

Our final approach is new; Brands recognizing that milestones are being rapidly reshaped for today's times, bringing new challenges, new frustrations, and new opportunities to rethink and restructure how we mark our milestones.

As consumers increasingly transition life events – weddings, funerals, graduations, baby namings, birthdays, first time riding a bike, etc. – to online in order to share them with those we love, brands are finding ways to bring people together for momentous moments during trying times.

It's not just about creating connections; it's about finding ways to truly bring a sense of celebration and satisfaction to each and every milestone, no matter how major or mundane seeming. Knowing that we don't know what consumer behaviors (e.g. social distancing) will be scabs vs scars in the near future, attempts at solving tensions that come with attempting to celebrate these milestones today provide insight into how milestones may be celebrated in the future

KFC

This year, Mother's Day, a day typically filled with in-person family time and activities, has brought new challenges and disappointments to those separated from their moms and loved ones. To help bring families together for a meal celebrating Mom, KFC is helping coordinate meals and video chats.

Partnering with Messenger From Facebook, consumers, via the KFC Facebook page, can engage with the Colonel (KFC's mascot) via its Messenger bot to coordinate everything from scheduling the meal time, personalizing the invitations with family photos, and setting up reminders for all family members to dial in for a video chat on Messenger on the actual day. The QSR is also offering free delivery to make it easier to get food on the table. It's a nice way to create a seamless offering that ensures all steps are covered when planning and executing a meaningful moment.



Facebook

As we reach the end of the school year, it's a painful reminder to many of the milestones they're missing out on in real life – prom, graduation ceremonies, etc. Offering a virtual way of attending, on May 15th, Facebook is hosting a virtual graduation ceremony for those who have had their graduations disrupted, tapping Oprah Winfrey for the commencement address, speeches from Jennifer Garner, Simone Biles, and more, as well as a performance from Miley Cyrus (impressive compared to who we had at many of our own ceremonies). Attendees can join via the Facebook Watch App, with Instagram providing momentum leading up to the event days before, by featuring videos that Instagram will start showing daily that spotlight “iconic senior experiences — from ‘most likely’ votes to portrait showcases to senior skip day.”



YouTube

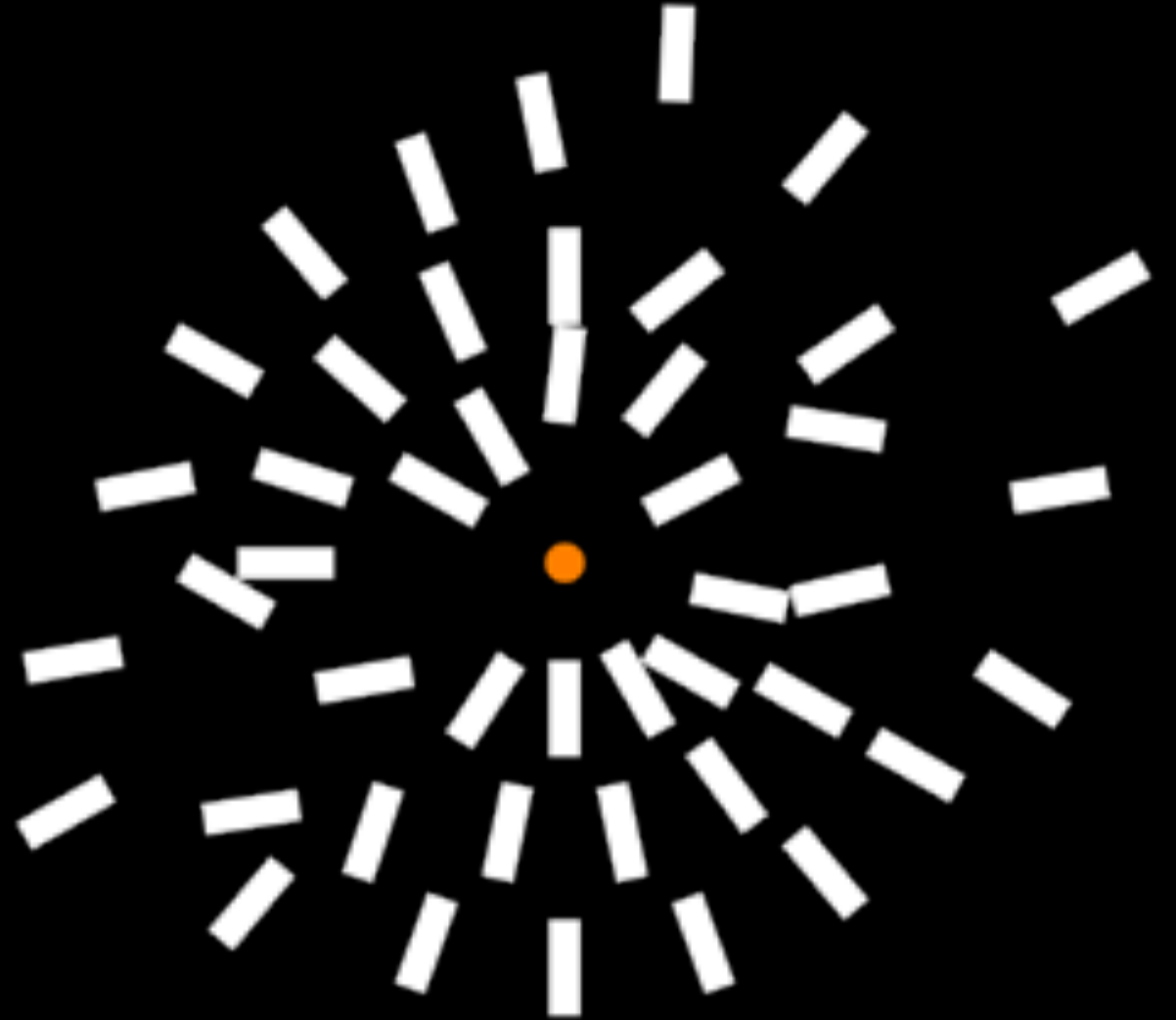
Actor John Krasinski's new Sunday evening YouTube news show, Some Good News, hosted an online prom, recognizing that "it's a very weird time, but each and every one of you are missing something and this is the least I could do and I couldn't be more proud to do it."

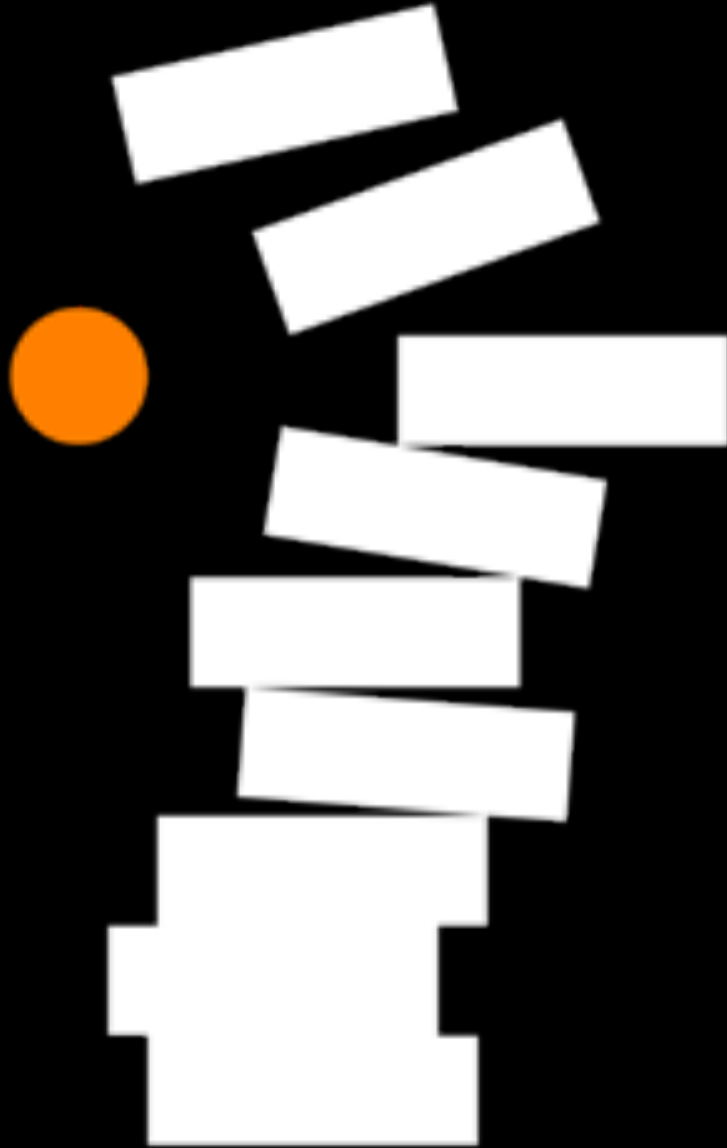
Featuring a slew of celebrity guests performing, including Chance the Rapper, the Jonas Brothers and Billie Eilish, as well as footage of teens around the world dressed for prom, it was a way to give millions of teens missing their high school proms a way to get dressed up (or not) and celebrate the milestone in their homes.



Final

thoughts





Final thoughts

As you see, it no longer matters what type of product you sell; every brand is now, or needs to be, a service offering. How consumers viewed, purchased or used your brand in their routines 6-10 weeks ago has dramatically altered, and most likely will continue to evolve. One thing is for sure; the need for service-oriented solutions from brands, no matter who they are, will be critical to earning your place in consumers' hearts and carts.

Delivering on these needs is a daunting task, but you don't always need to go at it alone. *We are seeing the power of partnerships emerge between companies and brands that have similar audiences, compatible needs or even struggles that compliment each other.*

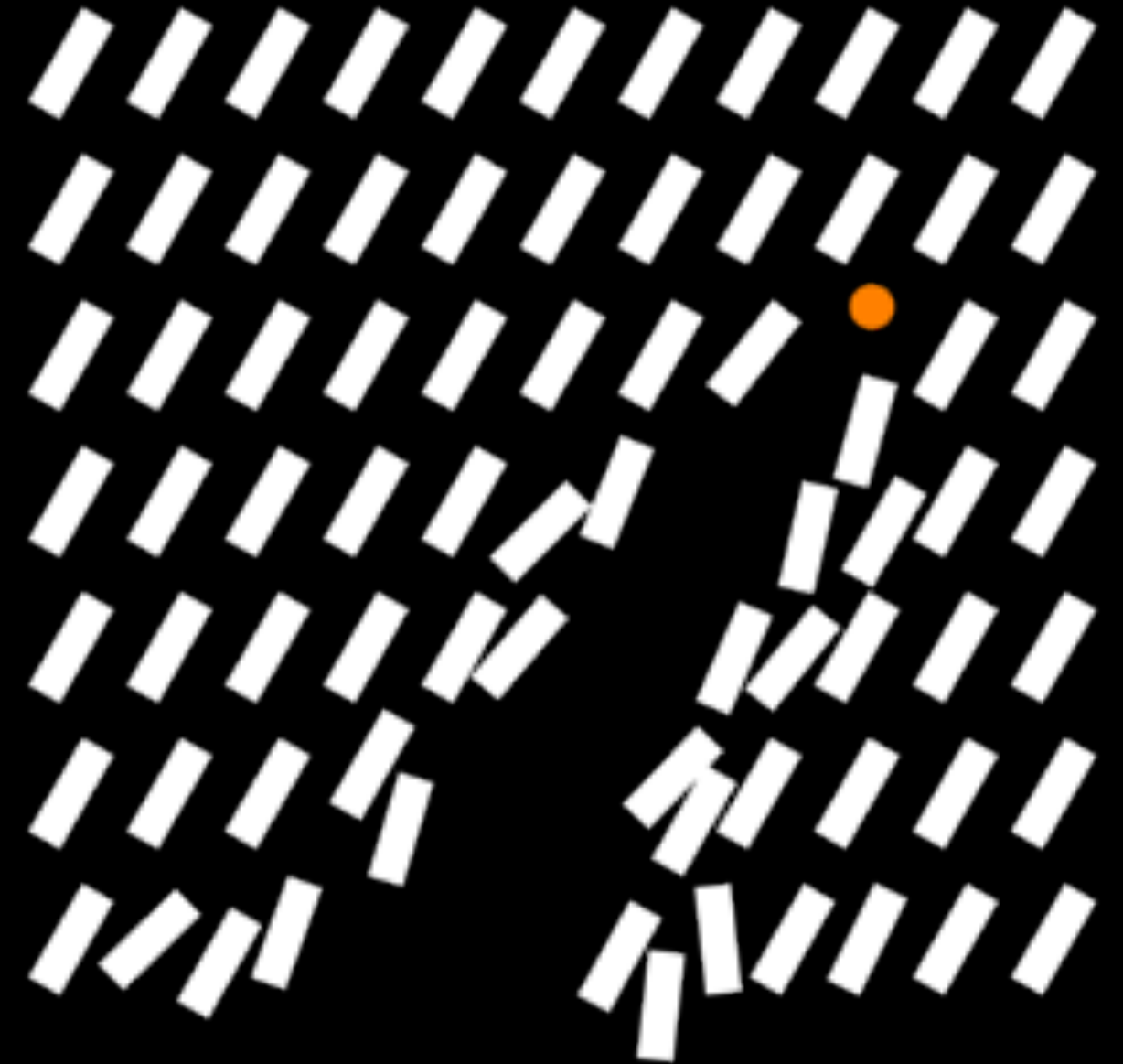
Targeting partnerships to either fill voids both companies are experiencing or to collaborate on delivering a 360-degree solution to a consumer need can help power solution-oriented series and stories driven by consumer-centric strategies.

We hope that this edition of Creativity In Quarantine can act as useful stimulus for own approach.

Questions?

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Wavemaker^o

Grow fearless