

Covid-19: Could remote working help retail re-evaluate its agenda?

As the impact of the coronavirus crisis grows every day, the retail world has had to evolve in countless ways, as how we shop and connect with each other has shifted dramatically. The pandemic has changed the way that all businesses are operating, not least in relation to working from home for those who are able to.



Image via Pxabay

"We are living through dark times but it is important to try to stay positive; and the situation may well be giving many companies the chance to take stock of the future," says Robert Lockyer, the owner of luxury packaging company Delta Global.

Here he looks at how brands are dealing with the crisis and how to best prepare for when life can eventually return to normal.

Keep connected

It is vital to keep up a dialogue with customers that is transparent, creative and presents solutions.

Though thousands of physical stores are on lockdown worldwide, many luxury lifestyle brands are still operating online. But,

with financial security uncertain for many, businesses must remember that now is not the time for a hard sell – they must show support for the communities which keep them going, says Lockyer.

The pandemic has forced the cancellation and rescheduling of many events over the last few weeks, but we've seen Milan, Paris, Shanghai and South Africa experiment with live streaming fashion shows, opening up a normally elite event to millions online and making it accessible to buyers, inspiring people around the globe – without the carbon footprint it once had.

And, following the cancellation of UK's Graduate Fashion Week, the organisers released a letter to the 'Class of 2020', announcing their continued support for students. They are now running a digital showcase, sharing the work of students every day on their social feeds and encouraging students to join the digital conversation.



Luxury brands' 3 best practices for coping with Covid-19

Xiaofeng Wang 17 Mar 2020



Instagram has introduced a 'Stay Home' story feature to encourage its users to stay home but remain socially connected during the pandemic. Brands and businesses are curating entertaining content under the Stay Home sticker, to keep in touch with their audiences.

"In these days of social distancing, conversation is key to strengthening the relationship between brand and customer, to help ensure they come back when you need them most," says Lockyear.

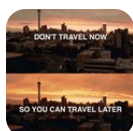
Positive messaging

Statements of solidarity have never been so important, with one of the first coming from Louis Vuitton. The luxury brand told its Chinese customers on WeChat and Weibo: "Every paused journey will eventually restart. Louis Vuitton hopes you and your beloved ones stay safe and healthy."

Luxury gymwear brand Sweaty Betty has been working alongside fitness enthusiasts and influencers to bring consumers a daily IGTV video of at-home workouts and nutrition advice. Working with influencers such as Caroline Inspired and Sleek Technique, they are keeping thousands motivated with free exercise routines and a daily challenge to keep people connected with them.

Community group Positive Luxury has set up a podcast 'power series' containing advice from top luxury CEOs, with the first episode discussing 'using better dialogue in times of uncertainty' to help brands to communicate effectively with customers during the outbreak.

"These messages must be consistent with your brand's culture. It's about creating a sense of comfort and customised contact – an empathetic and efficient approach is crucial," says Lockyear.



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Brendan Seery 31 Mar 2020



Togetherness over competitiveness

Brands have been uniting to help pull people through these difficult times with a range of creative ideas. LVMH has used its

perfume production lines to [start making hand sanitisers](#), while L'Occitane has donated over 10,000 hand creams to the NHS and is also manufacturing another 70,000 litres of hand sanitiser.

Meanwhile, Giorgio Armani donated \$1.43 million to four hospitals in Rome and Milan and Warpole members have been sharing resources surrounding the financial support available to British luxury businesses from the Government.

The British Fashion Council has launched a crisis fund to support creative fashion businesses and individuals. And celebrities such as David Walliams and the personal trainer Joe Wicks have got involved with inspirational work online - conducting lessons for children now being educated from home.

"All of this is helping businesses and individuals to keep our economy and our lives moving during the lockdown," comments Lockyear.



LVMH makes free sanitiser for French hospitals during Covid-19 outbreak

16 Mar 2020



Work-life balance

Keeping employees motivated while working from home – and customers connected – has become a must for employers.

Collaborative working platforms such as Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Slack and Zoom are truly coming into their own. Entertainment apps like TikTok are keeping our lives connected and our businesses moving. People are also looking to Facebook groups for support – starting up online book clubs, sharing photos and even conducting live bingo sessions.

"While we are still allowed to do our daily exercise out in the open, people are finding themselves bike riding, jogging and walking (at distance). But many of us, employers included, are seeing how working from home has created more time – instead of our daily commute, we are using this time wisely to organise our homes, exercise or to get creative," says Lockyear.

He adds that as firms navigate their way through this transition, staying connected and motivated is vital.

"Business must use this time to review and futureproof their brands. Keep people interested in what you do, give advice, increase awareness and build brand advocacy. Create for the greater good."

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