**A close up of a logo

Description automatically generated**

**Executive Summary**

**From Email to Tweets: How COVID-19 Changed the Digital & Social Media Crisis Response**

*Featuring [Dominic Parero](https://www.prdaily.com/ragan_speakers/dominic-parero/), executive director of strategic marketing for [UCLA Health](https://www.uclahealth.org/)*

**2020 summed up for comms pros: |**We’re rebuilding the plane while trying to fly at the same time.”

**Timeless advice.** “Be prepared, and be honest,” says John Wooden.

**Mental health is a growing concern amid COVID-19.** UCLA Health has pivoted external and internal content accordingly. (Are you addressing employee mental health and wellness amid our ongoing pandemic?)

**Establish a command center structure** to deal with confluence of crisis comms (internal and external)

* UCLA Health launched a COVID-19 chatbot to answer common FAQs.
* Patient emails ramped up hugely to address common concerns and fears.

**Don’t be tone-deaf as to what’s happening in the world.** Even if it’s uncomfortable or seems risky, it’s better to speak out on big issues of the day. Tackle touchy topics head on.

**Establish core content themes to drive your coverage.** Amid the pandemic, UCLA Health’s comms and content goals were to:

1. Build trust

2. Be informative

3. Inspire

**They established four pillars that would influence all comms:**

**1. Collective resolve.** Making messaging about a community-wide battle in which we’re all united.

**2. Citizen action.** Showing folks how they can help.

**3. Empathy.** Listening and being reflective to the emotions of the community.

**4. Gratitude.** Consistently thanking health care heroes and all essential workers.

**Pursue partnerships.** UCLA Health partnered with competitor health systems to craft messaging to convey a united, community-based effort to tackle the pandemic together. The result was a consortium campaign, “[Better Together](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/health-systems-unite-better-together-campaign).”

**Social media was crucial for UCLA’s message amplification.** They leveraged influencers and partnerships to gain more social media traction and get the #TeamLA hashtag rolling. They got Kareem Abdul-Jabaar to do “Motivational Monday” videos.

**Media relations remains crucial.** UCLA Health’s media relations team stepped up during the pandemic to secure placements for its CEO on every major network. Even if you can’t land major networks, it’s important for leaders to demonstrate real and reassuring leadership during COVID-19.

**Through paid and owned channels, UCLA’s numbers spiked during COVID-19.** They tracked a big increase in “Estimated unique reach” (for LA-area targeting), “Influential mentions” (347% increase YoY), Relevant Editorial Mentions and Media Inquiries.

**How do you prepare for the future?**

* “Your brand stands for more than the products and services it provides. It’s part of something bigger.”
* “It should be inextricably tied to the DNA of the communities it serves and has influence in.”
* “Respond thoughtfully and responsibly.”
* You can’t control what’s going to happen, but you can choose to be honest and transparent.
* **It’s OK to not have all the answers.** Stay nimble and agile, always ready to respond to employees and your audience.

**Communicating Through Social Media and Beyond to Audiences in Crisis**

*Featuring* [*Rory Gory*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/rory-gory/?id=238071)*, Digital Marketing Manager at [The Trevor Project](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/)*

**It’s more important than ever to message around mental health on social media.** Social media is, after all, a community. Pandemic has placed stress on individuals from a mental health perspective, including LGBTQ community members. They have lost support systems amid quarantine.

**Use these tools to research safe messaging around these topics**.

Safe messaging is a broad term used by the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention. When talking about mental crisis and suicide, start by reviewing:

* “Recommendations for Reporting Suicide”
* “#chatsafe: A Young Person’s Guide for Communicating Safely Online about Suicide.”

**Understand that mental health conversations are tied to “identity” and the concept of Intersectionality.** It’s defined as the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class and gender. Many individuals identify with various categorizations. WE rarely hold just one identity.

**How to speak to an identity-diverse audience:**

* Understand intersectionality to create inclusive messages.
* Understand your own unique POV and potential biases—as they may pose limitations as a content creator.
* **Practice “Allyship.”** There are multiple ways in which we are marginalized and privileged in our own identities, so build relationships based on trust, consistency and accountability with other marginalized individuals and/or groups of people based on your common areas of intersectionality.
* Use these resources to help start these conversations:
  + “Approaching Conversations on the Intersection of Race and LGBTQ Identity” blog post
  + “A Guide to Being an Ally to Transgender and Nonbinary Youth”

**Don’t overlook self-care**. Social media management requires a high level of emotional labor. Take care of yourself and make sure you’re getting the support YOU need as a social media manager—so you can successfully support your online community.

**Driving Message and Motivation Online in an Age of Misinformation**

*Featuring* [*Haley Correll*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/haley-correll/?id=238071)***,*** *Social Media Manager for the [American Red Cross](https://www.redcross.org/)*

**Why now—the 2020 challenge and wake-up call.**

**Problem:** Dr. Robertson Davenport, director of Transfusion Medicine at Michigan Medicine in Ann Arbor, announced at the onset of the Covid-19 crisis that they only had 1 day supply of blood for  hospitals.

**Solution:** The social media team at the American Red Cross responded to the challenge using an instructive OODA Loop framework that will help others thrive in chaos.

**The OODA Loop = Observe > Orient > Decide > Act.**

**Instructive case study using to OODA Loop:**

* **Observe:** Social listening is the most important element in social media, so ARC started by listening to the Q’s people were asking. Examples included: “Can Covid be spread through transfusions?” “Aren’t blood drives mass gatherings?” The team also tracked rumors and misinformation.
* **Orient:** ARC then oriented its challenges based on learnings from listening around these three messaging cornerstones:
  + **Safety:** How to encourage people to donate safely.
  + **Misinformation:** How to correct false rumors (e.g., the ARC is charging/profiting from donations).
* **Reach:** Best ways to get the ARC message out to large audience.
* **Decide:** Decision was made to address these cornerstones by:
  + Prioritizing “social care” (spent more time addressing concerns and answering Q’s).
  + Using existing relationships with influencers to spread the message.
  + Leveraging social media storytelling on ARC’s channels to share message.
  + Amplify the message and social content via owned and earned media channels (i.e., RedCross.org articles and media pitching).
* **Act:**
  + Created an ongoing “Covid-19 Social Care Guide” distributed to NHQ counterparts and regional offices (with approved social media messaging). Continuously updated the doc so all had same answers.
  + Activated ARC’s digital volunteer program. Volunteers responded to Covid-19 related social posts from their personal accounts (because hearing from a real person deescalates crisis situations in ways our branded handles can’t; carries more weight). They took 4-6 shifts for a month. Created private FB group for volunteers that included updated messaging, outstanding questions, etc.

**Other easy-to-implement takeaways:**

* **Put work in on the front end to establish relationships with influencers before crisis strikes.** For example, ARC flew bloggers to DC and let leadership connect with them. Then ARC sent an email to these social media influencers during the crisis—asking them to share provided pre-made social media posts, images and links.
* **Act more like a journalist than marketer when it comes to social media storytelling.** Don’t constantly push out asks or CTAs like “donate here.” Instead feature real people and show your messaging in a visual format. Write like you speak so it’s more relatable in a crisis (avoid marketing speak).
* **Utilize Tweet threads to get your messaging out in a more narrative format.**  Don’t try to fit it all in one Tweet or post. People lose context. For example, ARC stated what was needed, included quotes and told people how they could help—all in a series of tweets that built a longer narrative.
* **Increase your use of social media graphics.** If people are asking Q’s on a certain topic—then create graphical answers for them. ARC examples included feel good graphics after someone donated that they could share (e.g., “Not all heroes wear capes” + image; a stat graph graphic showing big #s of donors; infographics to educate, etc.). ARC crated 220 of these images since March 1.
* **Put a FACE to all your messaging.** ARC told/shared stories with images of people who would have died without blood donations. These included a simple photo plus short, tweetable three sentences + a quote.
* **Measure and adjust in crisis.** ARC saw an increase in engagement during the crisis. For example, one tweet thread saw 2.17 million impressions and 65.6 k engagements. MORE IMPORTANT: ARC increased blood donations directly attributable to social media posts (e.g., March 1-May 31 = 2,004 appointments. 2019 = 699 appointments).
* **If all else fails, recognize there is NO playbook.** At minimum, focus on two things and you’ll be successful:
  + Listen
  + Adjust

**Responding to Racial Injustice: How #BlackLivesMatter Changed the Social Media Crisis Response**

*Featuring* [*Imani Ellis*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/imani-ellis/?id=238071)*, Founder and CEO of* [*The Creative Collective NYC and CultureCon*](https://www.theccnyc.com/)

*Featuring* [*Jonathan Jordan*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/jonathan-jordan/?id=238071)*, Senior Vice President, Employee Experience & Business Transformation for* [*Edelman*](http://edelman.com/)

**Why this moment is different:**

\*Gone are the days where you can put out a press release five days later. By that time, Black Twitter has dragged you. -Imani Ellis, The Creative Collective NYC and CultureCon

\*This isn’t a moment that is going to go away. What are the actions that organizations can take both inside and contributing externally to working on this crisis. -Jonathan Jordan, Edelman

**How ‘speaking up’ builds trust:**

\*It is clear that folks expect organizations to speak out across demographics including race, political affiliation and age. There’s a lot of data that supports brands that speak out gain trust, they don’t lose trust. -Jonathan Jordan, Edelman

\*Think about how trust is built. It is repeated impressions. A beautiful font on a black background is not enough. -Imani Ellis, The Creative Collective NYC and CultureCon

\*It’s really easy to make a statement. It’s the journey and the energy put into “getting your own house in order” is what builds trust from hiring diverse candidates and promoting diverse leaders and more. -Jonathan Jordan, Edelman

**Where to start:**

\*It starts with empathy. It’s great that others are just learning about systemic racism, but it s a privilege to have never had to engage with it before now. – Imani Ellis, The Creative Collective NYC and CultureCon

\*There is going to be positive affirmation for transparency. If you say: “This should have been done years ago, but we are doing it now” People will understand. Not doing anything is the worst thing that you can do. - Imani Ellis, The Creative Collective NYC and CultureCon

**Hiding behind rules about political speech in the workplace won’t work:**

\*Right and wrong has nothing to do with politics. This isn’t really about politics. It’s a privilege to decide when or when not to speak about something when people are dying. – Imani Ellis, The Creative Collective NYC and CultureCon

**On leadership in this moment:**

\*Leadership is uncomfortable and when you don’t now you have to go back to being a student. You have to listen to the experience of your employees. You have to listen to the experience of your customers. The new normal is not going to be what the old normal was. Address what happened in the past, but let’s move forward. -Imani Ellis, The Creative Collective NYC and CultureCon

\*If you don’t have a chief diversity officer, find someone who will sponsor the diversity and inclusion. Have an organization that is passionate about D&I and make sure you have a D&I strategy. -Jonathan Jordan, Edelman

**Leading Through LinkedIn, Facebook and More: Executive Communications During COVID-19**

*Featuring* [*Micah Laney*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/micah-laney/?id=238071)*, Senior Manager, Executive Social Strategy at* [*Walmart*](http://walmart.com/)

**State your purpose.** Why are you here? You have to find your why and it applies to company products and media.

**Post only things which directly relate to your purpose**. People want to know what to expect when the follow any account. Be consistent.

**Build a community when you don't need it, so it’s there when you do.** Make sure you provide full access and give accurate information.

Three things Walmart learned from the El Paso tragedy—and used in social media posts with CEO Doug McMillon in the weeks following:

* I matter
* I’m part of something bigger
* We are making a difference.

“What I do know is Doug will continue to travel, continue to be apart of the community we have built and we will be there to document the experience,” said Laney.

**The end goal for any executive on social media is that they will manage their channels on their own.** The role you should take is to teach, then hand off.

My job is not to be the “end-all, be-all” for executive social media, but to show them how to get the content we need, says Laney.

**Riding the E-Commerce Wave: Navigating Search, Reviews, Social Media Ads and Reputation Amid COVID-19**

*Featuring* [*Emily Washcovick*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/emily-washcovick/?id=238071)*, Senior Business Outreach Manager for* [*Yelp*](https://biz.yelp.se/)

*Featuring* [*James Chong*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/james-chong/?id=238071)*, Senior Manager of Digital Marketing for* [*TOMS*](https://www.toms.com/)

**Emily Washcovick:**

**First element to have success:** Create a clear, concise and consistent message. Every business needs to have a clear and concise message across all platforms.

**Spread messages across all platforms:** Website, yelp listings, social media platforms, local and community websites / resource boards. As you have new features coming out, don’t announce it only once, but present the information multiple times.

**Reputation Management:** Most people go to the internet to complain? False. At YELP, 80% of reviews are neutral or positive.

**Identify trends or themes in reviews** and use them for customer service excellence.

**Actively listen and join the conversation** in order to gain consumer trust and stand out. The trend is businesses getting active and involved are seeing higher review counts, higher engagement. Simply getting involved will help you get noticed right out of the gate.

* 51% of consumers who write a review, expect a response from the company. By not responding, you are letting down more than half your base.
* Answer every complaint, in every channel, every time.
* Develop a strategy for response. Focus on higher level of positive reviews. Anything put on your Yelp page will help you appear in search results. Keep that in mind when responding to reviews.
* If you are in a high volume industry, use the direct message to send a canned message to everyone.
* **Respond to critical reviews.** Thank them for writing the review but then take the conversation offline.
* **Don’t interfere with the natural flow of reviews.** Don’t ask for reviews. Inspire great reviews organically.

**James Chong:**

**Staying relevant amidst a pandemic:** Something that everyone is being challenged with.

* Giving is in our DNA (as a company) we shifted our messaging to focus on this and activated it through all our channels.
* Had a consistent message we are here to help people during this crisis.

**Translating impact messaging to product:** We increased our ads and spend on the FB platform and leaned in to get more traffic and revenue. We combined the giving aspect to our products.

**We adjusted our evergreen creative to match the consumer mindset.** Because everyone is at home, we wanted our messaging to speak to them. Before, we had a lot of travel positive imagery we couldnt use because of the crisis, and changed our images to match the timeline of people staying and working from home. We had a lot of strong engagement on our ad spend and ads.

**Key Takeaways:**

* Lean in, not back
* Do good, genuinely
* Speak to consumer mindset
* Test and scale

**You have to be able to adjust and pivot** depending on the landscape of the day.

**Measuring Social Media Initiatives: What’s the Worth of a “Like” or a Follow?**

*Featuring* [*Kevin Goddard*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/kevin-goddard/?id=238071)*, Head of Social Media for* [*Amazon Web Services (AWS)*](https://aws.amazon.com/)

**Measuring is a flexible process.** Keep testing and trying new metrics to find what works best for you.

Social media marketers face one common type of question:

* “Did we go viral?”
* “How did our post do?”

**Content performance is critical and needs to be tracked daily.**

**The “One Ring” Engagement Rate Formula:** Total Engagements divided by Total Impressions, and multiplied by 100.

* Helpful, but can also be misleading. Not all engagements are equal.

**Stack ranking:** Ordering your metrics from most to least important.

* This is flexible based on the campaign or initiative.

**Determining weight**: Weight each metric based on your priorities. Then multiply the metric by that weight. This gives you a more nuanced view of how posts performed based on the most important priorities.

* **Another way to calculate weights:** Total of specific engagements, divided by total of all impressions, then multiplied by 100. This creates a normalized weight for all your metrics.

**A few other things to consider when creating a measurement plan:**

* Social listening is crucial to understanding the impact you’re having on customers, and the conversations they’re having
  + Nuvee and UVI are two social listening tools that Kevin recommends. They’re easy to use and give you a lot of flexibility and customization. Sprinklr is another good option.
* The more conversations you’re able to foster, the more conversions you will ultimately gain
* Determine your priorities based on customer impact, not “going viral”

**How Social Media Platforms Became COVID-19 Response Networks**

*Featuring* [*Aleksandra Kuzmanovic*](https://www.ragan.com/ragan_speakers/aleksandra-kuzmanovic/?id=238071)*, Social Media Manager at* [*World Health Organization (WHO)*](https://www.who.int/)

**Three main functions for WHO social media:**

* Inform public of health news and updates and advice
* Listen and respond to the community
* Fight misinformation

Public health advice is their bread and butter. The main thing people want to know is how to protect themselves.

* They share videos, do’s and don’ts infographics, and resource guides.
* Recently created a Tik Tok and Snapchat to reach younger generations on COVID-19
  + The challenge on Tik Tok was to match the lighthearted and funny nature of the app.

**Listening to audience concerns:** 99% of their social media efforts is listening.

* Content analysis, conversation monitoring and performance analysis are the three components of this

**Fighting misinformation:** It’s not a new phenomenon but in every outbreak you see rumors surge.

* Publish fact checks, compile common questions and provide responses.
* Three times a week, they livestream press conferences across social networks. They also run live Q&A’s with experts.
* Also ran challenge campaigns, quizzes with Mythbusters, and other collaborations with the entertainment industry.
* Created a health alert chatbot across messenger platforms
* Collaborated with FB to direct users straight to WHO’s page or other health authorities when they search for coronavirus information.
* Social platforms also created hubs where they curated content from WHO and other health authorities.

Engagement on WHO social media accounts grew across the board during the first quarter of 2020.

* High growth in followers showed that there was a hunger for trusted public health information

**Lessons learned:**

* **Listen closely** to how your audience is consuming content, so you can be as accessible as possible to them
* **Address both the knowns and unknowns**, and be honest with your audience about what you do and don’t know
* **Be creative** to make content around public health engaging
* **Use the power of networks and partnership**s. Work with outside groups to amplify your message.

**How will they maintain momentum?** Continuing to tell the general public what they can do as individuals to protect their health, and use the following and platforms they’ve built to continue their work.