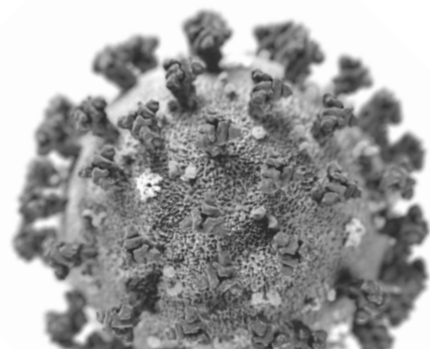
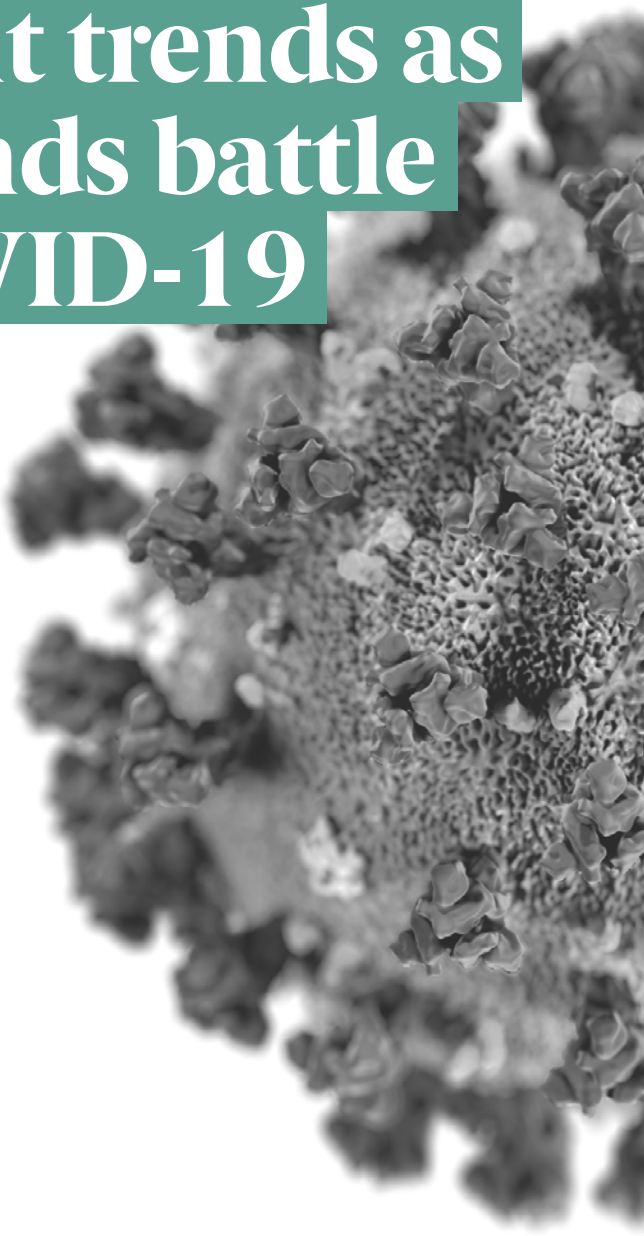


**RBH**  
CREATIVE  
COMMUNICATIONS

**Eight trends as  
brands battle  
COVID-19**





**RBH**  
CREATIVE  
COMMUNICATIONS

**Now, more than ever, we need to ensure that brands stay front of mind for when normal life or the new normal resumes and spending bounces back.**

**It was our advice to our clients during the 2008 recession, and it proved right.**

**With the social and digital worlds so firmly entrenched in the physical one, there are limitless opportunities for brands to involve themselves in people's lives, in ways that are positive, supportive and even change-making.**

**The following noteworthy case studies of brands reacting to the impact of COVID-19 are remarkable in their scope and thinking. They prove that while we have entered the unknown, brands can always adapt and find an authentic and empathetic advantage.**

**Debra Hepburn – Founding partner**

# Digital fashion



Rakuten Fashion Week Tokyo A/W 20

**The Business of Fashion reports that retail sales have dropped by 25% in Italy and close to 50% in China in the wake of the pandemic.**

With more and more countries following suit in locking down, live-streaming services have seen a huge rise in daily active users. Fashion brands have decided there is no reason they can't get in on the trend. WWD China and Rakuten Fashion Week Tokyo are launching the world's first digital-only fashion weeks, which will be globally live-streamed.

On April 1, WWD China's digital fashion week (a six-week summit) will feature talks and panels from leading fashion industry veterans. Perhaps more peculiarly, environmental scientists will be taking to the stage to discuss the more pressing matter of sustainability in fashion. To further the green message, there will be a collection of presentations from sustainable designers.

The entire event will be broadcast to everyone across the world, sitting on their sofas, home desks or kitchen tables. Some of the topics covered will be zero-waste design and ethical supply chains, the event will emphasise how important it is to act and produce sustainably, particularly during times of global crisis.

# 78%

Seventy-eight per cent of people want regular guidance on issues surrounding the coronavirus from health authorities, presenting a key spot for brands to assist if part of a legitimate health authority partnership.

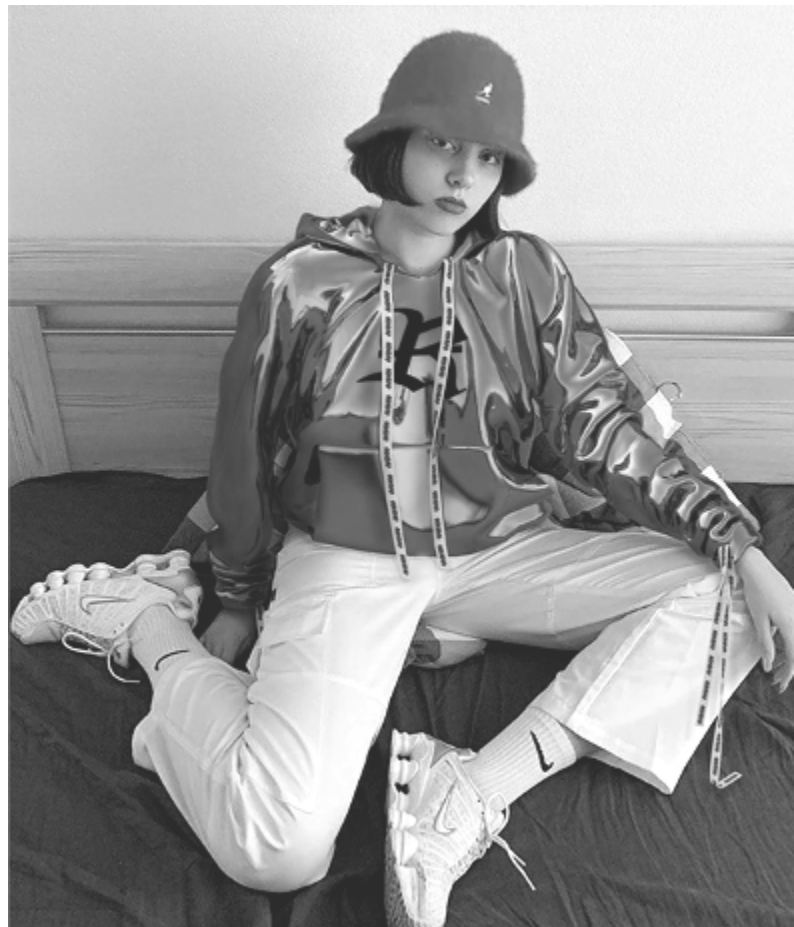
Edelman



Designers have already begun turning to channels such as Instagram Live and YouTube Fashion to showcase their collections in the past year. However, these will be the world's first digital-only fashion weeks. Following the cancellation of both Shanghai and China Fashion Weeks, as well as others such as Seoul Fashion Week.

Some young brands have gone even further, by using technology to launch fully

virtual lines. Newly launched streetwear company Rohbau has released a digital hoodie. The hoodie is fully iridescent, nongendered and costs €40. It was launched as a 'super-limited drop'. Rohbau aren't the first to do this. UK brand 'A Hot Second', Amsterdam-based 'The Fabricant' and Carlings have all creating digital lines of clothing for a social media and filter-focused generation of fashionistas.



**“As more and more events get cancelled and postponed due to health concerns surrounding the coronavirus, this creation of new digital-only events is a really exciting way to ensure that businesses can continue to operate, albeit if in a slightly altered way. It also sends a message to brands and consumers alike that even in difficult times, we must continue to create and move forward.”**

**Stylus**

# People are still consumers and they want to consume

While many restaurants whose kitchens remain open now depend on delivery and takeaways

**55% of consumers feel either option is “somewhat risky” (Datassential, March 11-13).**

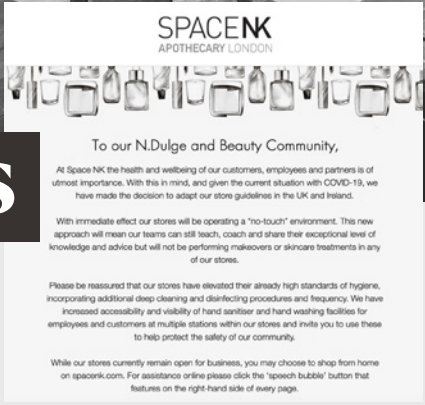
Brands have already adapted to this growing concern and we have seen a huge shift from brands such as Deliveroo, Uber Eats and Dominos in their delivery strategies. Postmates in the US was the first to add Dropoff Options to its app, allowing users to choose between picking food up at the door as normal or opting for no-contact deliveries. It has now become commonplace, not just in the food delivery business.

On 25 March, DPD introduced contactless deliveries as standard – opening the door to all independent stores who need logistics cover to embrace the new trend.





# Retail spaces adapt



**In the run-up to full isolation, retail in the UK has been all but closed for anything except essentials. Some brands, though, have found ways to adapt and operate with little or no physical contact with their customers – something we may well see implemented post-COVID-19.**

SpaceNK was the first to do so in the UK, stating that the change would mean its teams would still be able to teach, coach and share advice, but without performing hands-on makeovers and skincare treatments. Following this we saw Morphe implement similar standards and since then, Boots announced that its in-store advisers will similarly continue to deliver advice, but without make-up consultations.

COVID-19 cannot be entirely credited for shaping this trend. We've actually seen a remarkable move away from overly interactive retail staffing going back a couple of years. If we

take a look at French beauty brand Sephora's "please don't approach me if I'm using the black basket" in-store initiative in 2019 (which received praise from consumers on social media), we can start to see that great service doesn't necessarily mean being waited on hand and foot. Luxury fashion boutique Browns East, for instance, boasts an in-app feature that allows shoppers to message staff while actually in-store. In helping consumers side-step spoken language barriers or the intimidating prospect of a luxury upsell, this is an approach that will continue long after COVID-19 settles down and we think your brand should pay attention to it.



# Textiles won't be held responsible any further

**Amid fears that our clothes can hold and carry on a microbial level, a Swiss textile company has decided to fast-track its launch of a new textile treatment.**

The Viroblock NPJ03 from HeiQ uses a combination of technologies that inhibit the growth and persistence of bacteria and lipid-enveloped viruses such as COVID-19. In in-house tests on face masks, the treatment reduced virus infectivity by over 99.99%.

**“Our goal is to prevent textiles from becoming a host surface for propagating harmful viruses and bacteria – and contribute to reduce the risk and speed of contamination and transmission”**

**Carlo Centonze, chief executive of HeiQ Group**

From a brand perspective, the new treatment can be used on an incredibly wide range of textiles and materials, thus far including air filters, medical gowns and curtains, single-use non-woven fabrics being a pertinent application.

We see this pushing past the industries above. If automotive and fashion manufacturers could implement these measures, it would help in any future measures that might come into effect, as well as in garnering coverage from being associated with helping to save lives.



Viroblock NPJ03 from HeiQ is effective against the coronavirus

# CSR is more important than ever, helping people in need and stopping the spread

In the midst of the current crisis there are plenty of examples of consumer spending. But we must remember that the crisis will end – and once it has, **your brand needs to be front of mind.**

Here's how a number of brands are ensuring that will happen for themselves by finding new ways to generate content and offer genuine value to home-bound users.

Fender announced on 25 March they would be offering three months' worth of guitar lessons online – for free. This is the kind of branded content that has true value to consumers' lives and may well persuade them – when next they look to purchase a guitar – to consider a Stratocaster over a Les Paul.

Lush were giving back with branded hand-washing stations in their retail stores before closing. Marks & Spencer has published a series of 'Can I freeze it?' videos, fronted by its director of food technology and resident development chef. This video series aims to reduce food waste and make shoppers' budgets work harder in difficult times.

In America, Walmart and CVS are both turning their car parks into drive-through testing centres. To help meet huge demand, Walmart is looking to hire new temporary workers who have been left in unemployment by shut-down restaurants and bars, as is the Co-op in the UK, although Walmart's figure approaches 150,000 positions.



UK-based food chain Leon is working with Absolute Taste to transform its now-closed branches into mini-supermarkets, selling restaurant-quality pre-packed meals, meats and sauces for people to take home, as well as offering home delivery. Other F&B brands have been invited to join the scheme. We recommend everyone join where they can.





# Repurposing means

**Several brands are repurposing their production facilities or engineering departments to support efforts against the virus.**

French perfume and cosmetics giant LVMH is now producing hydroalcoholic hand gel for local public hospitals at three of its factories, stopping all makeup and perfume-based production in the meantime to focus on these efforts. French brand Pernod Ricard is donating 70k litres of pure alcohol to hand-sanitiser producers and, in the UK, Brewdog has begun producing hand sanitiser at its core distillery.



The majority of Formula 1 teams including McLaren, Red Bull and Ferrari have redirected their applied-technology divisions to create ventilators.

Over 1,500 chief executives in the US have signed on to a new initiative called StopTheSpread, which was launched on March 14 by Ken Chenault, former American Express chief and now chairman at venture capital (VC) firm General Analyst, along with Rachel Carlson, head of Guild Education, a US education-technology platform.



# #StopTheSpread



## Our Healthcare System Needs Help Now

The healthcare system needs our help to rapidly increase COVID-19 support and recovery around the US. We're focused on creating partnerships with manufacturers and helping to distribute critical medical devices and healthcare products. We would love to hear from you if you believe your company can help support these efforts.

Partner with #StopTheSpread

StopTheSpread

The initiative is designed to focus on building links between medical supply manufacturers and distributors during the pandemic. The second focus, one we would like to see implemented worldwide, is on helping prop up independent businesses. This initiative is called #payitforward, and its goal is to get larger companies with more liquid assets to pay small business vendors immediately, instead of net 30 or 45 payment terms.

On top of this, other brands have jumped at the opportunity to help with the scheme. London taxi-hailing apps Free Now and Gett have also offered to transport homeless individuals to the rooms to avoid the need to use public transport.

Finally, Public Health England have announced that thousands of 15-minute home tests for COVID-19 will be delivered by Amazon to people self-isolating with symptoms. They will also go on sale on the high street by the end of March, in what the Guardian has called 'a move that could restore many people's lives to a semblance of pre-lockdown normality'.

# 225%

Unsurprisingly, in February 2020, UK hand sanitiser sales saw a year-on-year increase of 225%, prompting philanthropic brands from beauty to alcohol to repurpose their production facilities to make more

Kantar UK

In London, hotel group IHG is working with Sadiq Khan to block-book 300 of its hotel rooms at a significantly lower rate – opening them up to the city's rough sleepers to self-isolate. Funding for the initiative comes from the UK government, with the rooms open free of charge for homeless individuals known to local charities. Not only will this help back the economics of the hospitality industry but also those who are most in need right now.



A medical biologist handles a swab to test a patient for coronavirus. Photograph: Ian Langsdon/EPA

# Keeping our students in the know and kitting out our NHS

To help students in the US move back home and self-isolate, two brands have made an effort to enable those without the means to do so.

Enterprise Rentals has waived its fee for young renters and, more importantly, reduced the minimum age for car rentals. US moving company U-Haul is letting students across North America store items for free in U-Haul operated storage facilities for 30 days.

Every F&B big player in the UK has moved to support NHS workers. We've seen Pret a Manger and McDonalds offer free drinks during this time. Allbirds, the ethical and sustainable clothing brand, has offered 2,000 free pairs of shoes to NHS staff. For medical professionals in Spain, Pronovias has pledged free wedding gowns for hospital workers, called 'The Heroes Collection'.

An advertisement for Enterprise Rent-A-Car. It features a parachutist on the left and a smiling woman on the right. The text reads: "MORE VEHICLES. MORE LOCATIONS. WHATEVER THE MISSION". Below the text is a row of various Enterprise vehicles, including a Mercedes-Benz. The Enterprise logo is in the bottom right corner.

MORE VEHICLES. MORE LOCATIONS.

## WHATEVER THE MISSION





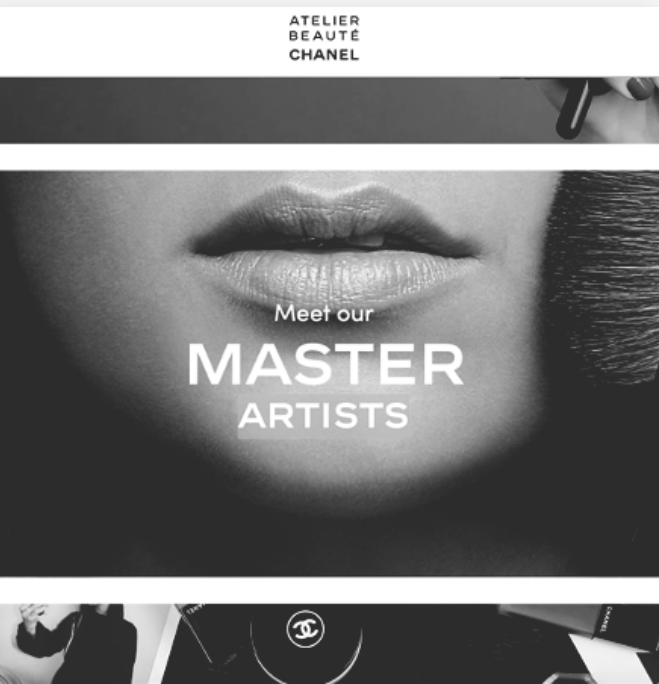


# Embrace E-commerce and live virtual augmented reality

**Utilising live experiential e-commerce is crucial for cutting through in a time like this. Virtual Beauty Consultations are becoming more and more popular, with Chanel rebooting its Atelier Beauté store in NYC with its 'Master Artists' and 'Beauty Guides'.**

These are one-to-one makeup chats that people can have in a digital setting. You can get information on how best to use your existing beauty products or have a skincare chat that results in a personalised skincare regime. When people are out and about again, there will be one makeup brand that stays clear and present in minds – the one that adapted.

Another beauty industry pioneer is Credo, who previously launched 'Credo Live' a feature designed by British shopping experience firm HERO. It lets consumers connect from e-commerce directly to a brand representative instore for quick 30-second chats and tasks such as complexion matching and skin care advice.



## Online sales for Credo were 20% higher than average over the past weekend [14-15 March]

The retailer's virtual consultation tool is especially popular: it saw a 34% increase in virtual consultation chats over that weekend, compared to the average Saturday and Sunday, leading to a 10% increase in conversion through the channel.

It's clear that a proactive, human touch – even in these uncertain times – can bring great results. It also shows that people are still willing to purchase in these difficult times.

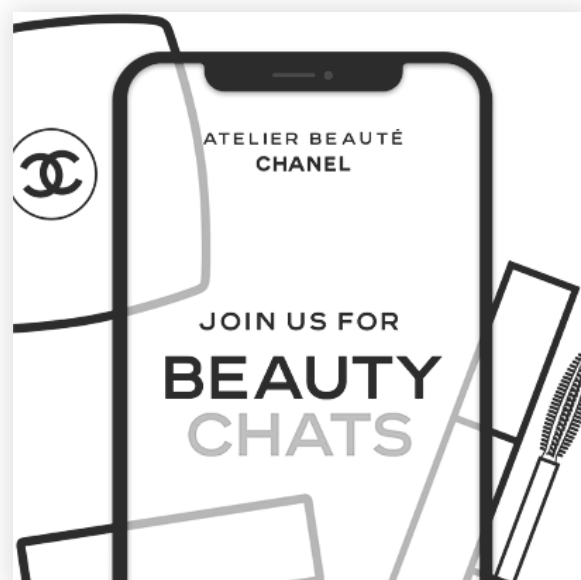
**“While far from new, live commerce has come of age during the pandemic, thanks to its capacity to connect consumers with brands interactively and in real-time. These virtual consultations aren't just about shopping, they're a key distraction from self-isolation – especially in the beauty sector – keeping brands front of mind.**

Credo Beauty CEO Dawn Dobras

# 50%

Until the week of March 9, 50% of the UK's meals were provided by restaurants, 50% by supermarkets. With supermarkets struggling to meet demand and restaurants forced to close, fast-food chains such as Leon (see below) are picking up the slack.

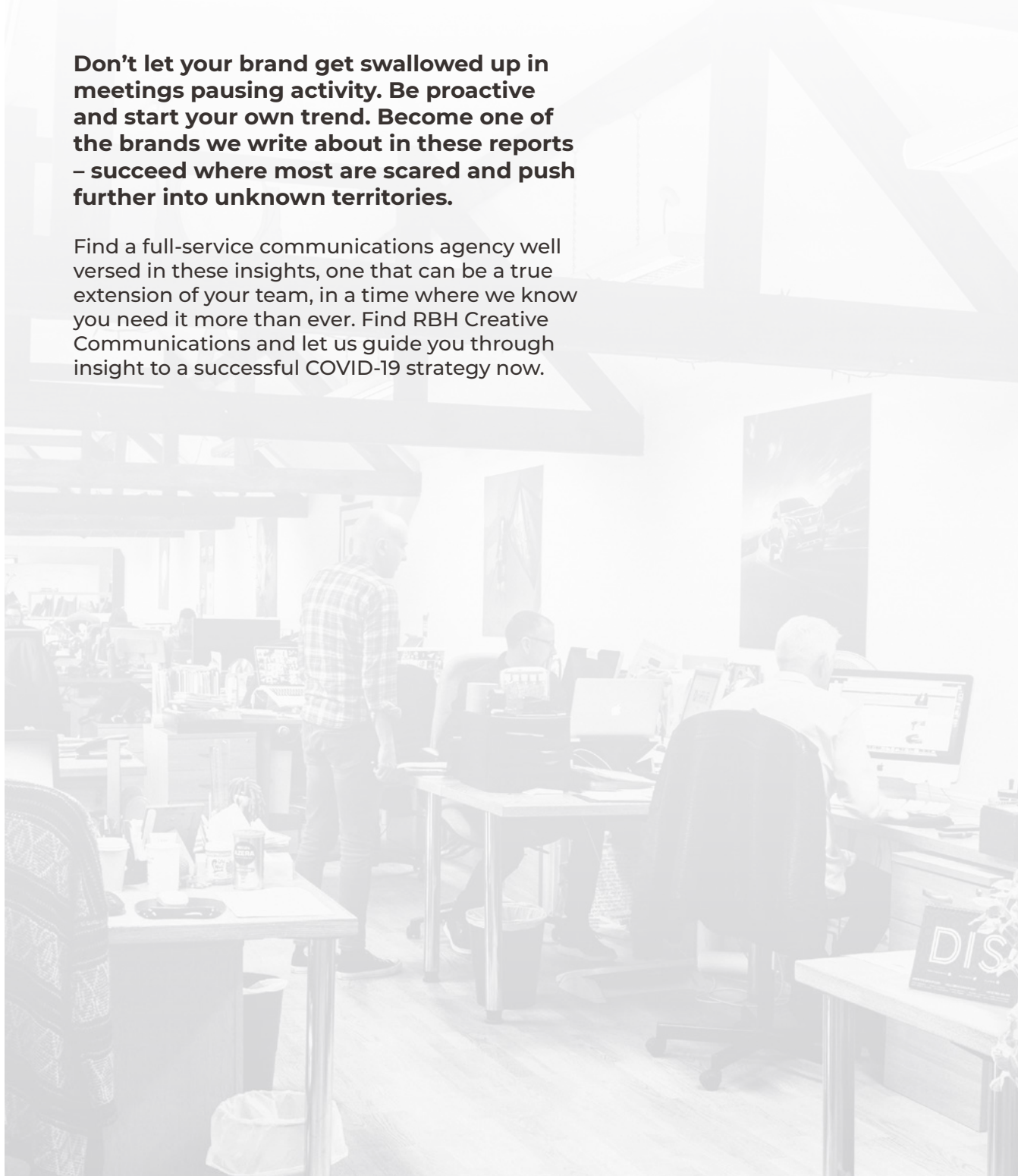
Leon



# Conclusion

**Don't let your brand get swallowed up in meetings pausing activity. Be proactive and start your own trend. Become one of the brands we write about in these reports – succeed where most are scared and push further into unknown territories.**

Find a full-service communications agency well versed in these insights, one that can be a true extension of your team, in a time where we know you need it more than ever. Find RBH Creative Communications and let us guide you through insight to a successful COVID-19 strategy now.





If you're keen to keep your brand working smart and turn these insights into something powerful, get in touch with RBH by contacting [joe@rbh.co.uk](mailto:joe@rbh.co.uk)