The State of Branding Report:
COVID-19 Edition

Industry research on the impact, priorities, and future plans of brands in the midst of COVID-19.

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Welcome to Bynder's COVID-19 edition of the State of Branding Report. Following just two months after the release of our **2020 edition**, we surveyed 300 creative, marketing and brand professionals—approximately a month after the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic—to gain a better understanding of how organizations are approaching the radical changes to business-as-usual brought about by COVID-19.

Many of us are wondering how best to respond to such an unprecedented crisis, and what impact it will have going forward, asking ourselves:

- *What should be our number one priority as a brand right now?*

- *How should COVID-19 influence our marketing strategy—now and in the future?*

- *How do we prevent making marketing missteps during such trying times?*

By gathering industry-wide perspectives on how brand professionals are dealing with the new normal, this report shines a spotlight on our most common challenges and provides guidance on how to put our best foot forward in the COVID-19 era.

Lastly, we'd like to extend our gratitude to everyone who participated in the study. Your input will benefit not only the industry but also those hardest hit by the pandemic. Every study completed means an extra donation to one of our client's relief funds: Spotify's **COVID-19 Music Relief Project**.

If you'd like to make a personal donation, click the link above for more information.

Andrew Hally
Chief Marketing Officer at Bynder

"One month into the COVID-19 pandemic, this snapshot finds the creative and branding community transitioning relatively smoothly to the radically different work environment, with a focus on updating messaging and campaigns for the new market reality rather than completely reinventing their brands. The professionalism, thoughtfulness and empathy we see makes me proud to be part of the marketing community."

Snapshot summary

Our research found that most teams have transitioned to remote work with minimal disruptions to productivity, though team collaboration is an area that many found challenging when working as a distributed workforce.

As for the effects of COVID-19 on brand strategies going forward, most organizations are currently focused on tweaking and developing messaging that's sensitive to the times, although radical marketing pivots are not quite so widespread yet.

Before taking a deep dive into the results, here are our key takeaways:

- **57%** of those surveyed believe COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on their brand/marketing efforts, but it won't be transformative

- **36%** of respondents have actually increased their output of marketing campaigns since the COVID-19 outbreak

- **More than half** of those surveyed feel that the need to work remotely has only had a "small impact" or "no impact at all" on team productivity

- **1 in 2** brand professionals see the development of new messaging, content and campaigns in response to COVID-19 as their highest branding-related priority right now
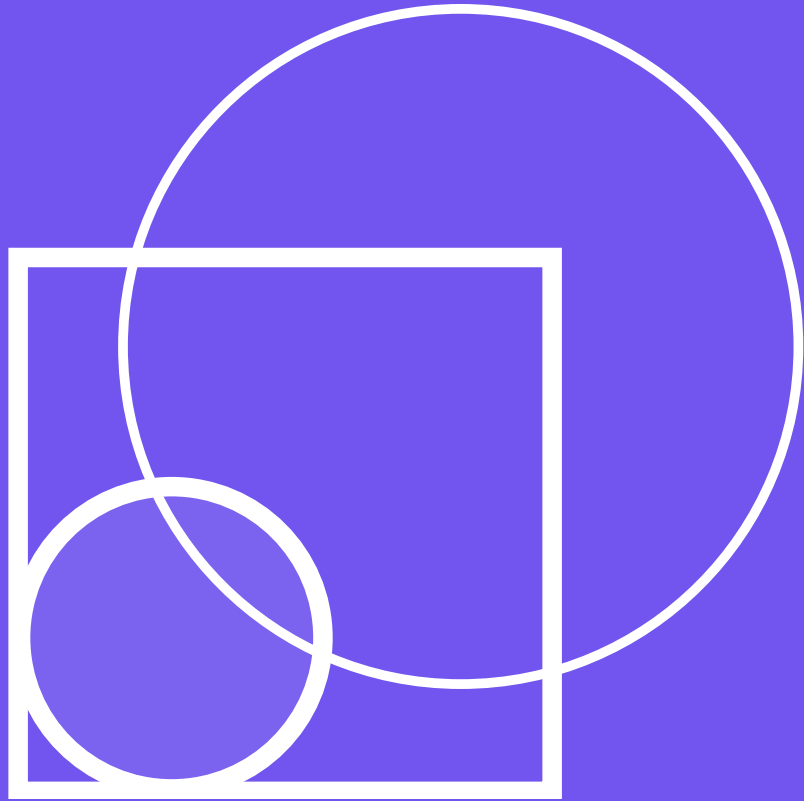
The impact of COVID-19 on brand strategy

How has COVID-19 affected brand and marketing strategies?

Since the outbreak, one question on the minds of every brand professional has been:

"How should we, as a brand, respond to the crisis?"

Given the unusual nature of these times, there is no tried-and-tested brand strategy to follow. Our results imply most organizations are careful not to succumb to rash decisions, and instead are adopting a more cautious approach. **45%** of those surveyed are "tweaking focus and messaging", with just **18%** believing that they have to "drastically change the way we do business".

53% of respondents see the development of new messaging, content, and campaigns in direct response to COVID-19 as their highest branding-related priority right now—more important than

ensuring existing messaging/content isn't tone-deaf to the times (**19%**). **52%** of those surveyed feel "somewhat concerned" about making missteps that could affect their brand image, while **27%** are "very concerned".

When it comes to the long-term impact of COVID-19 on brand/marketing efforts, **13%** believe that the pandemic will have a permanent impact on branding, while **17%** are more optimistic and feel that the effects are only short-term. However, the majority of those surveyed (**57%**) take a more moderate approach, believing that COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on branding and marketing, but it won't be transformative. This may point to a widespread belief that although the economic and social impact of COVID-19 on marketing will require brands to shift their strategies in the near future, the nature of brand building as we know it won't drastically change.

How much impact is COVID-19 having on your brand and content strategy?

Moderate - we are tweaking our focus and messaging

45%

Strong - we must pivot our brand and content strategy

31%

Extreme - we have to drastically change the way we do business

18%

Minor/None - we are making minimal/no changes to our strategy

6%

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, how concerned are you about making missteps that may harm your brand image?

Somewhat concerned

52%

Very concerned

27%

Unconcerned

22%

" During this time, it's more important than ever that brands present themselves with one unified voice and remain close to their brand values.

Which of the following represents your company's highest branding-related priority right now?

Developing messaging, content and campaigns for a marketing pivot and current COVID-response campaigns

53%

Shifting resources to infrastructure readiness and improvements in operational efficiencies

26%

Ensuring our messaging and content isn't tone-deaf to the seriousness of the current situation

19%

Other

2%

To what degree has COVID-19 affected the number of campaigns your brand is going to market with?

We increased our marketing campaigns somewhat

26%

We decreased our marketing campaigns significantly

25%

We have not increased or decreased our marketing campaigns

24%

We decreased our marketing campaigns somewhat

17%

We increased our marketing campaigns significantly

10%

How significant do you think the COVID-19 disruption will be to your usual branding/ marketing efforts in the long-term?

There will be a lasting impact, but it won't be transformative

57%

It's only short-term - things will go back to normal soon

17%

COVID-19 has permanently changed branding

13%

Unsure

13%
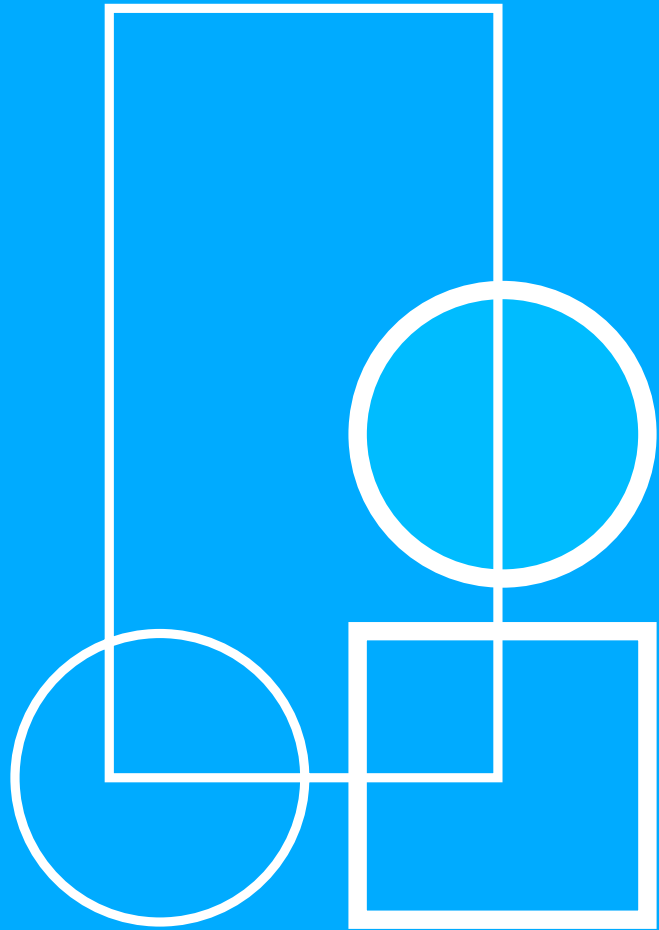
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It's changing the dynamic of how our customers behave, which is making it important to pivot – but how much and for how long is more a guessing game than science at the moment.

The organizational impact of COVID-19

How has COVID-19 affected day-to-day working for the average brand professional?

The sudden shift to remote working in response to COVID-19 has raised many questions about productivity, team collaboration, and company culture. Will the "new normal" of digital workplaces become a mainstream fixture of working life after the pandemic?

One thing's for sure: the digital infrastructure of organizations has been put to the test like never before, with many teams coming to terms with just how technologically equipped they are to support the needs of an entirely remote workforce.

Our results suggest most teams have transitioned to remote working more smoothly than many would assume, with more than half of those surveyed feeling that the need to work remotely

has only had a "small impact" (**40%**) or "no impact at all" (**19%**) on team productivity.

However, such a drastic change has prompted many to reassess their digital transformation efforts, with **42%** of respondents seeing "room for improvement" when it comes to their tech stack. Interestingly, **46%** feel "very prepared" for the challenges brought about by COVID-19, believing they have all the tools necessary to operate remotely.

But regardless of where teams are located, how has COVID-19 affected day-to-day working within organizations? **42%** of those surveyed are spending more time communicating, fielding requests, and syncing up with colleagues; **38%** are heavily investing their resources into updating messaging and pivoting their content strategy, and **30%** are cutting back usual activities as they assess the new situation.

How has COVID-19 changed the makeup of your team's day-to-day work?

More time spent communicating, fielding requests, syncing up

42%

Resources are heavily invested in updating messaging and pivoting our content strategy

38%

We have cut back our activities as we assess the new situation

30%

We've had to put important tasks such as photoshoots, PR-initiatives, and market research on hold

29%

Other

6%

"

I believe that in the long run, remote working will be much more widely accepted and offered with less resistance.

"

COVID-19 has been a huge driver for "digital transformation" and has put our company in a place I didn't expect to see for 3-5 years.

What is the top challenge your team is facing while collaborating remotely?

Loss of passive knowledge sharing and informational collaboration

28%

Getting all the work done with fewer people and resources

26%

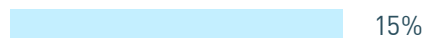Not going live with content and campaigns quickly enough

18%

Coordinating as a team online is unstructured and inefficient

11%

Our tech stack can't meet the requirements of a fully-remote workforce

3%

Other

15%

Not having each other in the office to bounce off ideas to each other.

No real challenges. I'm seeing a bias for action on our marketing department. Better to just get it out there compared to waiting.

We were a remote team already, so no impact/challenge.

How prepared is your marketing tech stack to face the challenges brought about by COVID-19?

9% Not prepared

45% Very prepared

45% Somewhat prepared
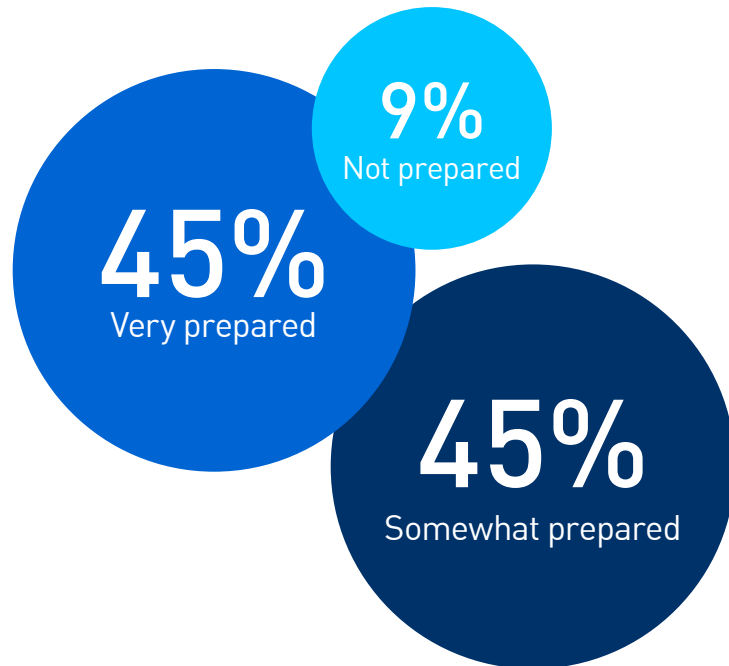
How has team productivity been affected by the need to work remotely?

Small impact - some minor adjustments to the way we work

40%

Moderate impact - we can operate remotely, but it's not ideal for our team

34%

Not at all - remote collaboration doesn't change the way we work

19%

High impact - we have to drastically change the way we work

7%

Methodology & Demographics

We conducted this survey to capture a quick pulse of the marketing community's immediate response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The data included in this report was gathered between April 10, 2020 - April 24, 2020. We received 301 responses from marketing professionals including managers, directors, VPs, and CMOs across a variety of industries.

Industry

Technology	23%
Creative/Marketing agency	18%
Consumer goods	11%
Industrial goods and manufacturing	9%
Healthcare	9%
Financial services	7%
Travel and hospitality	6%
Government and education	3%
Other	14%

Company size

1 - 249	43%
250 - 500	6%
501 - 1,000	11%
1,001 - 5,000	15%
5,001 - 10,000	7%
More than 10,000	17%

Job role

Marketing manager	36%
Marketing director/VP/CMO	21%
Brand manager	9%
Marketing operations	8%
Creative services	10%
Other	17%

About Bynder

Bynder's digital asset management platform helps teams collaborate in the cloud, get content to market faster, and maximize the impact of their marketing assets.

From retail giants and financial multinationals to fashion boutiques and not-for-profits, Bynder helps streamline brand operations for 1800+ businesses across the globe.

We're obsessed with "what's next?" in branding, marketing, and technology, and our annual State of Branding Report aims to get to the heart of the biggest questions in branding today. You can check out the 2020 edition **here**.

We also host Europe's leading branding conference, **OnBrand**, bringing together 1,900+ marketing and creative professionals in Amsterdam each year to hear from some of the brightest names in branding today.

Check out **bynder.com** for more insights on how you can harness tech to grow your brand and accelerate workplace creativity.