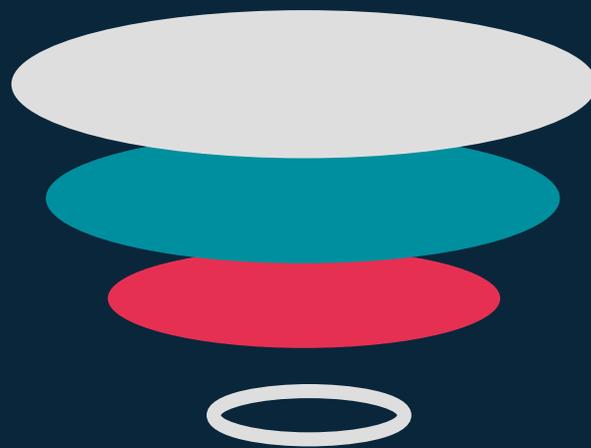


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ARTICLE

THE HEALTH REVOLUTION: FROM “WELLNESS” TO “WELLBEING”

Madrid, September 30, 2020

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that the COVID-19 has resulted in disruption and sweeping changes throughout all areas of our personal and professional lives, something that has naturally been very stressful. And in response to this sense of anxiety, there has been a swift and comprehensive shift from “wellness,” an individually-focused concept, to “wellbeing,” a more holistic vision that touches all people and industries across societies.

This is fairly new territory. While wellness is not an entirely novel concept, the move to wellbeing has meant that all of society is now being asked to get involved. Consumers now expect everyone from employers and brands to schools and industries to participate in social wellbeing, a drastic change from the reality just a few short months ago.

WELLNESS IN THE PRE-COVID WORLD

Wellness has been a societal concern for some time, as can be seen in the rise of personal health practices, growing legislative movement around health, push toward destigmatizing mental health issues and takeoff of the fitness, spa and self-help industries.

For example, the number of Americans practicing yoga rose from 20.4 million in 2012 to 36 million on 2016, and a number of cities and countries passed soda tax laws between 2011 and 2018. Global Wellness Day was first introduced in 2012, and it has been celebrated every year since. And more broadly, after growing by 12.8% over the past two years, the wellness industry now accounts for more than 5.3% of the global economy.

This new industry had more wide-reaching implications as well. Its foundation (and growth) seems to have “freed” companies working in other sectors from the obligation of placing stakeholder wellbeing at the center of their activity. Instead, these concerns were left to the wellness industry.

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HOW COVID CHANGED THE GAME

As the world comes to grips with the first global pandemic of this nature in recent history, there has been much speculation about what we have learned, what we consider essential and the aftermath it will leave. At the heart of all these arguments is the universal opinion that the wellness (and moreover, wellbeing) of students, parents, children, partners, workers, survivors and carers is absolutely fundamental to recovery.

Without societies’ – and businesses’ – capacities to holistically focus on people’s wellbeing (including physical, emotional and spiritual health), creating safety nets to allow citizens to return to work (or any other social arena) and be productive will be almost impossible.

Governments are assuming responsibility for putting programs into place to support citizen wellbeing, but all aspects of the private sector are also being expected to contribute to these efforts. Wellbeing has become truly:

- **Multistakeholder**, with employees, not just consumers, at the center of it.
- **Multisectoral**, affecting all sectors and brands regardless of the products or services they offer.
- **Multidimensional**, which is why we have moved from talking about “wellness” to talking about “wellbeing,” which includes dimensions such as the mental and financial, among others.

This new, broad focus on has caused people’s expectations to quickly shift. Now, corporations (whether in the health sector or not) are expected to take a position on wellness matters that affect all their stakeholders, including both employees and consumers at the center of it.

But the view on what this “wellbeing” society should promote has also changed, moving from the simply physical (providing tissues in public spaces, allowing sick leave or encouraging proper eye care) to become a holistic concept that encompasses physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

“Without societies – and businesses – capacities to holistically focus on people’s wellbeing, creating safety nets to allow citizens to return to work and be productive will be almost impossible”

These “beyond-the-physical” areas of wellness can be broken down into several key categories:

- **Social:** Developing a sense of connection, belonging and support with others in the community.
- **Spiritual:** Finding meaning life events, demonstrate individual purpose and live life that reflects your values and beliefs (discovering the sense of purpose)
- **Environmental:** Maintaining good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support wellness from the outside in.
- **Emotional:** Coping effectively with the pandemic’s stress, maintaining a proper work-life balance and holding satisfying relationships (as well as keeping a positive attitude).



But the pandemic has done more than accelerate existing trends in wellness. It has also created new ones or changed what existed so drastically, be it in terms of scope, action or audience, as to make it more useful to talk about these trends as being new. We must all be aware of these changes as we work to address wellness in our own local realities.

- **Sanitary security.** While there was a pre-existing trend around strengthening your immune system and avoiding illness had always been important, it has never before been such a global concern.
- **Health as an aspect of corporate responsibility.** In this context, wellness and health very quickly moved from each individual's personal responsibility to something business were not only societally expected, but also legally mandated, to take on. Mask mandates, face shields, gloves and other protective measures appeared almost overnight, and are here to stay for at least the time being.
- **Anxiety and fear.** Beyond the direct effects of the pandemic, it has also created an atmosphere of heightened anxieties for us all, leaving people worried about their wellbeing on a number of axes – health, financial, etc.

- **Lifestyle changes.** Wellness-focused lifestyles are not a new concept, but the pandemic has changed who is adopting them. Many people have introduced new patterns or habits into their lives, including around what they eat, how they relate and how they spend their time, among other things. This is in part due to the long lockdown and the time it gave people to experiment, and in part a response to the sanitary security and atmosphere of anxiety and fear.
- **Digitalization.** When the physical world went into lockdown, society moved to the digital space. This was one of the most important responses to the restrictions on physical contact and fear of the contagion's spread.
- **Individuality.** As people are forced to socially distance and isolate from one another, there is more individualization in certain habits and customs that were previously social affairs.

BRINGING WELLBEING INTO YOUR BRAND (AND COMMUNICATING IT)

The vast majority of global consumers trust the private sector more than they trust any other institution, including media, government and NGOs. This presents a tremendous opportunity for brands to go beyond storytelling and move into storydoing – meaning actively communicating the initiatives they are undertaking based on what is most important to their local communities, taking a multistakeholder approach.

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As such, now more than ever, every company in any industry needs an inspiring narrative that transcends its products and services. This should be a priority for all areas, not just the traditional wellness businesses of nutrition, tourism, personal care, beauty and fitness. Whether wellness is the focus of your business or entirely new ground, brands need inspiring, action-backed stories capable of generating confidence.

First, however, we must look at some of the key areas of wellbeing most relevant to stakeholders during this turbulent time. While there are many aspects to this, including food, nutrition, travel, personal care and others, some are much more broadly applicable to brands, including:

- **Mental health.** While this is often thought of as an individual issue, collective mental health is also extremely important – and the pandemic has turned our world into a breeding ground for disorders such as anxiety, depression and even post-traumatic stress.
- **Environment.** An area intrinsically linked to brick-and-mortar business, the physical environment available has changed rapidly in less than a year. The increase in distance work and need to ensure safety has changed how businesses look, leaving open questions such as what the “new normal” will be like in these places where people spend so much time. Even those places that have kept their doors open have seen major environmental changes, many of which only highlight the differences between our world today and what normal life used to be. Finding an “escape” has become increasingly difficult.
- **Resocialization.** This important process is about reacclimating ourselves to living and working together after (or during, depending on location and outbreak pattern) this time of social distancing. Many people are craving community, and creating this sensation from afar is not easy.
- **Digital disconnection.** It is more urgent now than ever that we find ways to disconnect, especially with so many working from home. Consumers and employees alike are demanding businesses contribute to the awareness of the effects and risks associated with hyperconnectivity, which COVID-19 has drastically accelerated.

But if society is expecting brands to contribute to wellbeing and take an active role in supporting their stakeholders along these axes (and they are), the natural next question is, "How?" Some of these answers are clear – for example, the necessary physical safety precautions are well-covered by governments around the world – but some are more difficult to grasp.

Some of the steps to consider are laid out below.

Step 1: Make sure you have a good narrative

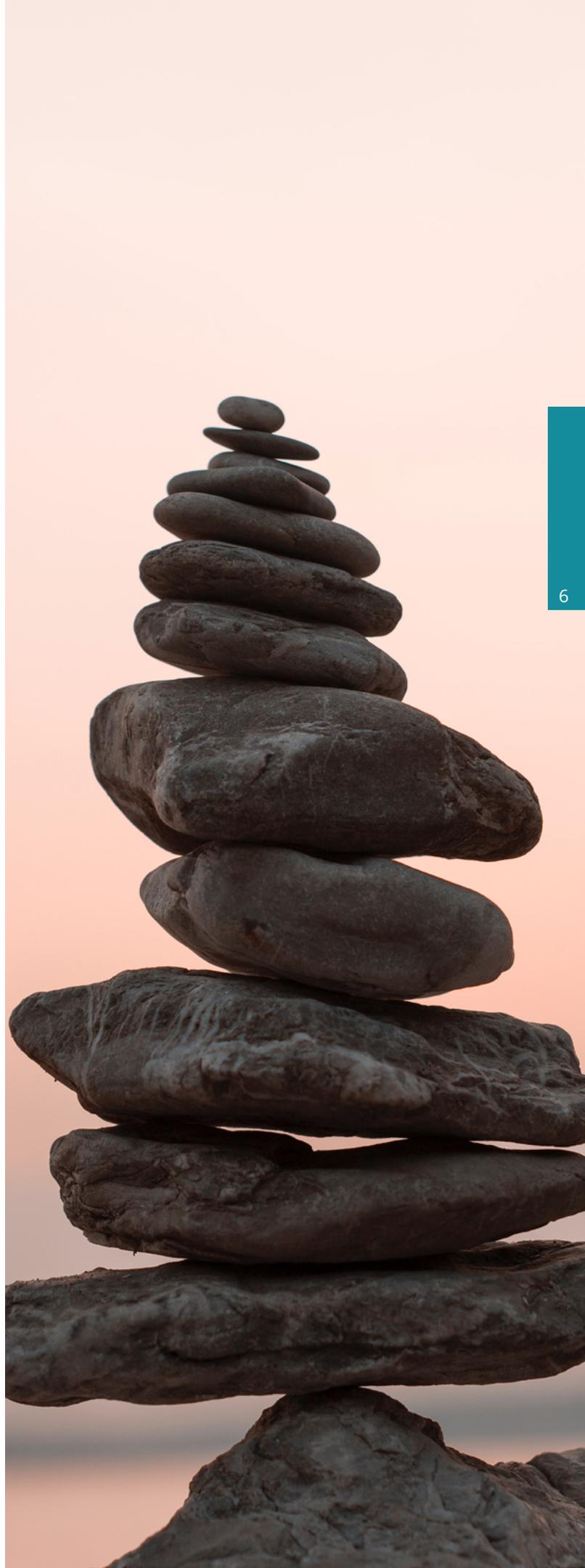
Now is the time to communicate beyond your typical products and services. Consumers and stakeholders of all kinds are expecting more from companies, making it important to dedicate time to develop an inspiring narrative with a strong focus on wellbeing.

In this, a human and personal approach is more important than ever. Society is demanding empathy and authenticity in all communications, and finding ways to organically incorporate and address some of the above issues will help you as you incorporate wellbeing into your brand image.

Step 2: Connect with your stakeholders

It is no news that there are constant conversations going on among your stakeholders, but it has become increasingly important to connect and engage with these discussions. This involvement will not only help build brand relationships, but also increase your understanding of their priorities and concerns in terms of their own wellbeing.

Once you know the areas most important to them, it will allow you to act intelligently to incorporate wellbeing into your brand promise.



Step 3: Build content for a clear purpose

While evergreen content is an important component of any strategy, our extreme times call for purpose-built content that focuses on how it can help your stakeholders. During this stressful pandemic, people are naturally drawn to what can provide comfort, stability and reassurance - in other words, to things that enhance their wellbeing.

Developing content that has been tailored to your stakeholders' needs to accomplish this goal will help you cultivate brand loyalty and produce content that creates an impact, as well as links your brand to the all-important concept of wellbeing.

Step 4: Grow your tribe and cultivate trust

Trust is paramount, and brand ambassadors have always been important to cultivating it among stakeholders. The pandemic has only enhanced this reality. Now, your network of ambassadors - including both employee and consumer stakeholders - is key to helping your brand incorporate the concept of wellbeing and weather this storm.

After all, it is important for stakeholders to feel as though your brand does, in fact, have their wellbeing in mind, whether you do so explicitly or implicitly. Your narrative (what you say) will go a long way toward reaching these groups, but it is your actions (what you do) that will ultimately convert stakeholders into ambassadors. To do this effectively in today's world, your brand must show a focus on wellbeing.

Throughout the process, it is key to ensure your stakeholders know your brand is interested in and committed to their wellbeing. To properly communicate this, it is just as important to listen to their needs as it is to take action. The brands capable of placing wellbeing at the center of their activity, treating it as much more than just another launchpad for communications, will be better placed to shine in today's uncertain and challenging environment.



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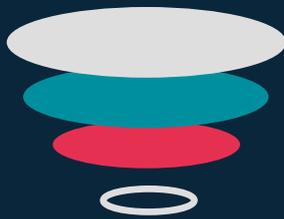
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