

# Holland Cooke Newsletter • May 2020

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## Commercial Copy Points that Resonate During the Pandemic

*“Brand Management in the COVID-19 Era,” page 4...*

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## Will Donald Trump replace Rush Limbaugh?

*Stranger things have happened. Hey, he’s president! Page 3...*

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## Are you sulking? Or shining?

Radio’s group owners continue to announce cutbacks, the bigger the company the worse the bleeding.

Like their lives generally, listeners’ media consumption habits are now radically atypical, and will be for the foreseeable future. And when the crisis has passed those habits will be forever changed. Assume two things:

- People are sampling content and dayparts – and using devices – that they don’t usually. You never get a second chance to make a first impression; and you’re making yours right now. “Discovery” in consultant-talk.
- Well-intentioned colleagues reckon “these are great days for News/Talk!” MAYBE. The housebound are watching TV. And quarantining has whacked TSL in-car, where the format thrives. So Alexa matters a LOT. However they hear you, are you beleaguering the business-as-usual format-caricature political narrative? Or are you an empathetic companion?

***“Greetings, virus people!”***

Ken Freedman on WFMU/Jersey City, “your station from the epicenter!”

Interviewed for the New York Times report “Community Radio Fights to Stay Live (and Weird) Despite Coronavirus,” Freedman call this “the situation that so many broadcasters dream of! You have a global, captive audience, and everyone can share and commiserate their experiences.”

## SPLIT SCREEN

***“At a moment of profound dread and uncertainty, people are being cut off from soothing human contact.”***

The Atlantic

***“I am deeply saddened that we need to make these painful moves at this time, but they are necessary under the circumstances.”***

Entercom CEO David Field, telling employees that – like other big debt-laden groups – his had to resort to layoffs, furloughs, and pay cuts.

Hey, times were tight – and tightening – even before the pandemic. “Local talent” is dang-near an oxymoron. But local talent is radio’s future, if radio is to have one with digital use so heavy and growing.

- Otherwise, are voicetracked music stations just Pandora-with-too-many-commercials?
- And as Rush Limbaugh shares that he’s needed a wheelchair lately, Talk stations built-around plug-N-play syndicated longform need to innovate a new business model for The New Normal, a focus in my work with client stations.

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*Grab the arm rest! Here, at dizzying velocity, are...*

## 6 IDEAS IN 5 MINUTES

### 1. Purge from your on-air vocabulary: "THAT'S the \$64,000 question."

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the questions outnumber the answers; so we're all at-a-loss.

But this particular cliché refers to a TV show in the 1950s, when \$64K was big money. Too dated.

### 2. Common commercial copy mistake I hear: Identifying the advertiser too early.

- Instead: Start in the listener's world, articulating the "YOU/YOUR" situation the advertiser can address.
- When I asked Siri "What is empathy?" she answered: "the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference, that is, the capacity to place oneself in another's position."
- END with the call to action, after explaining the advertiser's solution.

### 3. Attorneys hosting weekend call-in shows: Don't say goodbye at the end.

Instead: "We're moving over to the Internet now;" where "the lawyer is in, and the meter is off;" and you invite visitors to ask legal questions via Email link or a fill-in form. THOSE are warm leads.

- It's that no-cost/no-obligation initial consultation visit...without the visit, while we're sheltering-in-place.
- MORE at TalkRadioROI.com

### 4. And for ALL Talk Radio weekend warriors: Archive all calls on an ongoing basis...

...so you can re-purpose them, as topical podcasts. Doing so increases ROI on your weekend airtime, by making your work more available, via your web site, iTunes, etc.

And you can recycle them into a future show, to steer it topically; and so you always sound in-demand.

### 5. Don't name callers waiting on Hold.

This sends the wrong message to listeners we want calling: They'll have to wait. They can't.

DO tell them they're coming-right-up...OFF-air. Have your screener tell `em "you're next."

### 6. Commercial Copy Cliché Alert:

At this point, the situation is implicit. Skip the cliché, and use found time to sound less rushed.



Bill Coleman ▶ Stupid Advertising

5 hrs ·

Is all your blank needs  
being replaced by "in  
these uncertain times"

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## Ready for...The Trump Show?

Legend has it that – while he was willingly nudged-into running for President in 2000 – Governor George W. Bush really wanted to be Commissioner of Major League Baseball. And in his book "[For the Good of the Game](#)," Bud Selig reckons, "Had things been different, he could have been the ninth commissioner, not me."

### "He and I talked about it."

Selig, who then owned the Milwaukee Brewers, admits "I told him at the time that I didn't want to be commissioner, and I really didn't. George would have done a great job. He had a great personality and he loved the game." But then a funny thing happened in Florida.

Fast-forward to Election Night 2016. Shortly after polls closed at 8PM, Don Jr. is quoted as saying his father "[looked as if he had seen a ghost. Melania was in tears—and not of joy.](#)" And Steve Bannon said he saw Trump Sr. morph from "a disbelieving Trump and then into a horrified Trump."

### Roger Ailes: If you want a career in television, first run for president.

"[I can be the most famous man in the world](#)," Trump told aide Sam Nunberg at the outset of the race. Encouraged by Ailes, The Donald was floating rumors about a Trump network. He would come out of this campaign, Trump assured Ailes, "with a far more powerful brand."

Had Mrs. Clinton courted voters in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, The Trump Show might be on the air now.

### Back to the Future: 2020 is "a referendum on Trump."

We know Edison Research as an authority on audio listening. Their prescient ongoing "[Infinite Dial](#)" survey steers broadcasters as listeners' consumption habits change. And (nonpartisan) Edison is also THE exit poll-taker to the networks.

Edison president Larry Rosin just released "[Portents for November](#)," based on 37,001 voter interviews, from the Iowa Caucus through March 17. Among his conclusions:

- "The uniting force within the Democratic primary electorate is anger with Donald Trump."
- "Like most presidential elections with an incumbent on the ballot, the race will tend to be more about that incumbent."
- "The Democrats appear largely to be unified around their candidate."

With pandemic disruption tempting The Gipper's old maxim "Are you better off than you were 4 years ago?" – and with "numbers guy" Trump seeing Approval/Disapproval scores as the daily briefing takes on his arena rally tone -- WHAT IF..

### "Trump Wanted a Radio Show, but He Didn't Want to Compete With Limbaugh."

Lotsa buzz about [the New York Times report](#) that "on a Saturday in early March, Donald J. Trump, clad in a baseball cap, strode into the Situation Room for a meeting with the coronavirus task force. He didn't stop by the group's daily meetings often, but he had an idea he was eager to share: He wanted to start a White House talk radio show."

Whereupon, El Rushbo quickly quipped: "We're always looking for guest hosts here. If the president wants to guest host this program one day, we'd be happy to run an audition."

With affiliates I hear from asking so anxiously "Who takes over when...?" – and with Coronavirus surge data grading the administration's early response – it's worth a shot.

PS: I REALLY miss baseball.

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## Weathering The Storm: Brand Management in the COVID-19 Era

Commercial broadcasters subsist on advertising by businesses, most-of-which, are OUT of business now. But as we watch television, we're seeing local advertisers emulate the pertinent, tasteful way national commercials acknowledge what's happening, and convey that "we've got your back;" or, simply, "Be safe."

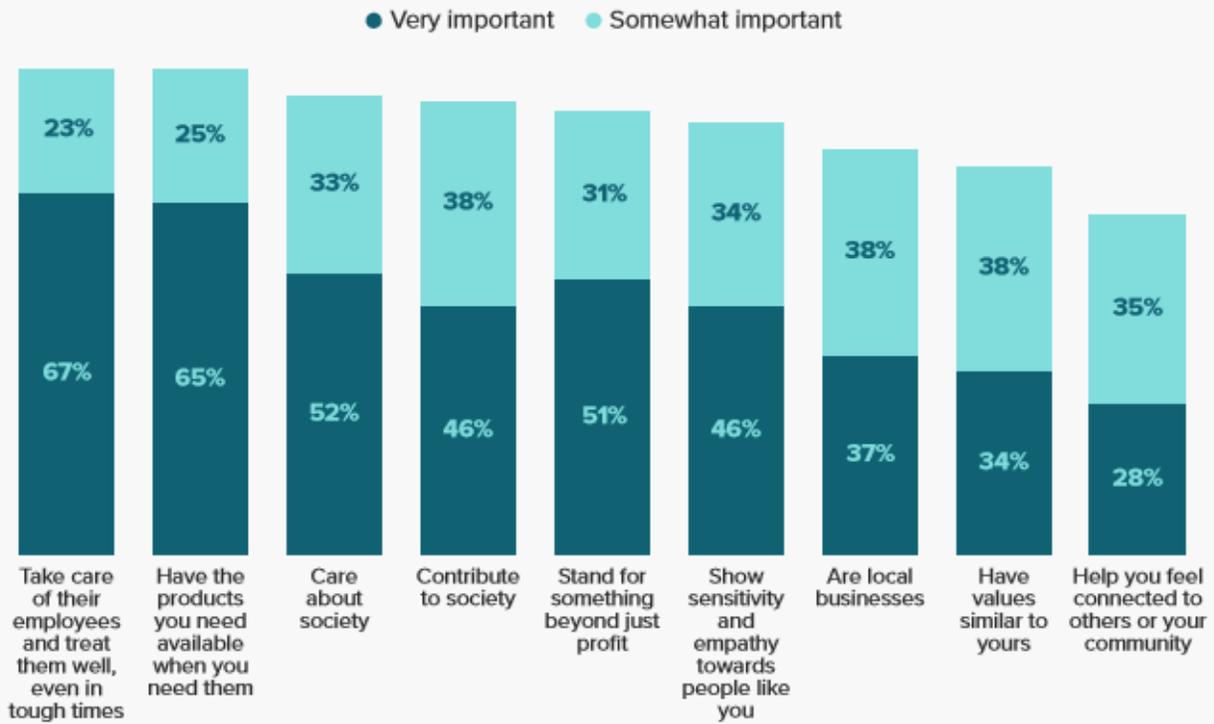
*"Proactively communicating with, appropriately connecting with, and authentically comforting your audience have the potential to translate to everything from increased affinity in the short-term to unbreakable loyalty in the long-term."*

**GREAT BIG hat-tip to The Morning Consult**, "a global technology company revolutionizing ways to collect, organize, and share survey research data to transform how decisions are made." And this [FREE download at MorningConsult.com](#) recommends specific, tested guidance for crafting commercial messages to convey our clients' concern for listeners in a way that will resonate long after the pandemic passes.

### To weather the storm, it's critical to:

- Understand **developments in buying behavior, consumption preferences, and overall attitudes, as well as brand sentiment**, especially which behavioral and attitudinal changes are going to be permanent — ongoing insight on changing consumer dynamics is imperative as the situation continues to evolve and potentially sticky habits form
- Consider the **implications of actions taken today on consumer relationships tomorrow** — when trust can be broken in a moment, real-time insight on what's working and what's not, as well as how actions will be viewed by consumers in the long term, is especially critical, particularly along dimensions that matter most like relevance and trust
- **Put people** — your customers, staff, and ideally society as a whole — **before profits** to build affinity today, trust into the future, and loyalty for the long-term
- Whether through products that make people's lives easier or in broader aid to combat the crisis, **it's no longer about talking about values, it's about demonstrating them** — show how you are helping
- Forget about being overly feel-good, and instead **act with both empathy**, keeping promises, providing useful information, and making sacrifices to contribute to the greater good, and **authenticity** — "rubber hits the road" applications of purpose will go farther than talk
- Show you are taking this situation seriously by **acknowledging** the social, financial and other realities of this pandemic, **empathizing** with people's concerns, and **offering** practical solutions
- Stay in touch with your humanity by **widening your aperture** to stakeholders, not just shareholders — help your customers as fellow people, treat your employees fairly and with dignity, and contribute to the greater good of society to drive both greater likelihood of purchase today, and also consumer choice into the future
- Above all, whether by serving customers in new ways, implementing new procedures to protect their well-being, or making an effort to help the broader situation, **don't disengage from the moment**

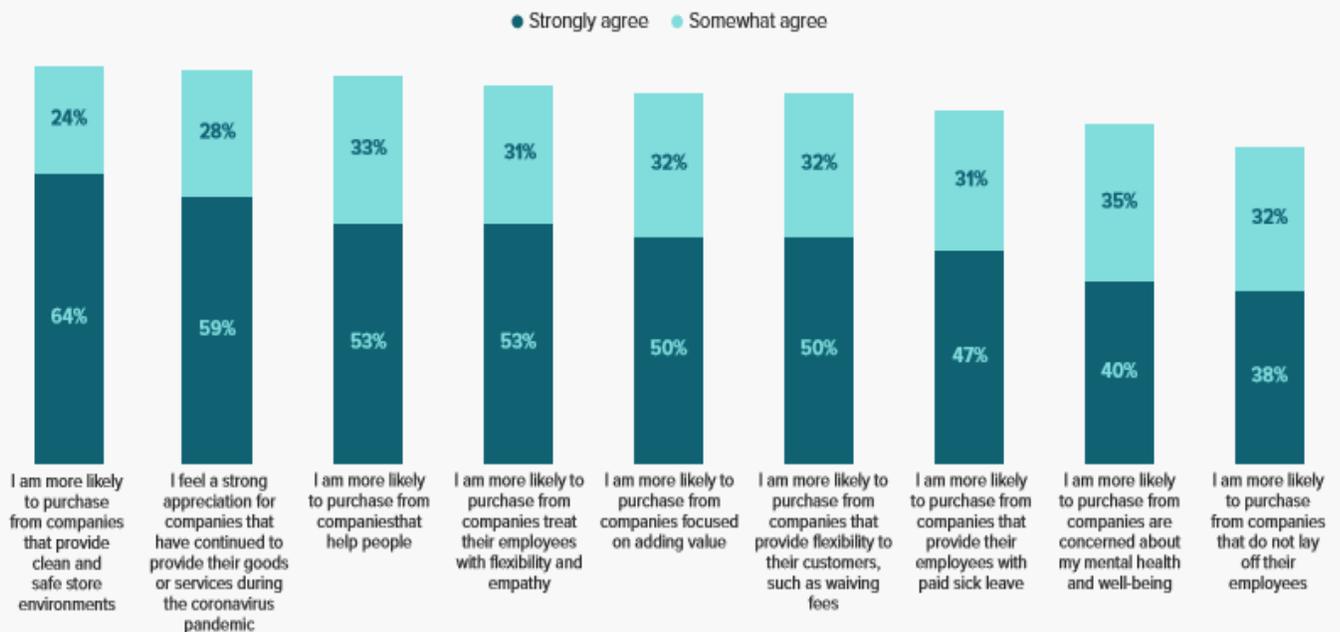
## How important is it to you that companies you purchase goods or services from do each of the following?



*“A bond forged in times of difficulty can be the strongest bond of all, and if we want the public to trust us again, we need to demonstrate we are on their side when they need us.”*

— Keith Weed, former CMO, Unilever

## Share of Americans agreeing that in times like this...



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## Lights...Camera...You!

Many of us are broadcasting from home; and lots of radio hosts are adding video to their repertoire. Those CNBC people seem well-equipped by their network. But even if you're just talking to a webcam, there are simple things you can do to look your best. Tips, from a pro, shared by The New York Times' Maureen Dowd:

*“Put the computer up on a stack of books so the camera is slightly higher than your head. Say, about the top of your head. And then point it down into your eyes. Then take a tall lamp and set it next to the computer on the side of your face you feel is best. The lamp should be in line with and slightly behind the computer so the light falls nicely on your face. Then put a piece of white paper or a white tablecloth on the table you are sitting at but make sure it can't be seen in the frame. It will give you a bit of fill and bounce. And lots of powder, et voilà!”*



*I snapped this picture in Pittsburgh, while visiting my client there. We both chuckled, wondering if one wily entrepreneur operated both franchises. Now, as many localities deem both gun stores AND liquor stores “Essential” businesses, ya gotta wonder “What could possibly go wrong?”*

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## Squint. You can see The New Normal coming.

It's appropriate that we recall "breaking into radio" in those terms. Often it was, literally, Forced Entry. We hung around a station until severe weather or the flu or some other desperate circumstance thrust us behind the microphone.

Back to the future: That building is disappearing, as "the station" is moving to the Cloud. Work-at-home remotes we're doing during this crisis are a preview. Even before the pandemic, big groups were automating clusters. What began as gallows humor is coming true: Markets where an owner has more stations than employees.



*The very last person I hired at WTOP (1990!) demonstrates the very best acoustic situation for remoting from home.*

### **It's not just radio.**

Many industries and workplaces are undergoing forced innovation. Radio tech talker and "Into Tomorrow" host Dave Graveline says he's getting lots of questions about working-from-home. "A lot of people have cellphone connectivity issues, particularly in more rural areas;" and they're relieved to hear about cell signal boosters and other gadgets and hacks Dave recommends.

### **The doctor is in...the Cloud.**

Like telecommuting, tele-medicine is another trend-already-in-motion which the crisis is accelerating. Each year at the Consumer Electronics Show predictions seemed futuristic: "You'll visit your doctor less, and be healthier," because sensors will monitor our vitals, and we'll interact with the doc via video chat and other virtual means.

On Dave's web site (IntoTomorrow.com) you can click-to-interact with Clara, the Centers for Disease Control chatbot, "an online Coronavirus self-checker, who guides you through a series of questions that are guided by Artificial Intelligence. At the end, the bot will make a recommendation, such as treat yourself at home or seek medical care."

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## SOUND BITES

### **"Making sustainable attainable."**

Whole Foods

Strive to position your advertisers – and your station – as succinctly to the consumer's agenda.

### **"So many of these songs just aren't played on the radio any more. And if you want to find them good luck searching online or in a record store, if you can find one of those."**

Donny Osmond, hosting a 30-minute TV infomercial for 150-title Time-Life "Pop Goes the 70s" CD collection.

### **"Unfortunately, it's no longer sustainable to continue to run the business in a way that delivers the service our community expects and deserves."**

WNPV/Lansdale PA GM Phil Hunt explaining that "it's become increasingly difficult to grow our audience and advertising revenues" as he told listeners that his station "will go off the air at the end of April."

### **"A lot of sound design is just me sitting with a digital recorder trying to figure out if I can make a twig snap sound like a bone crack, or digging around in a can of dog food sound like an alien autopsy."**

John Ballentine, who described his "Campfire Radio Theater" to PodcastMagazine.com as "an anthology of self-contained 30-minute stories...like old-time radio...like the movie soundtrack with the projector bulb turned off."

### **"It's basically 'Wayne's World.' Everyone's in the basement with baseball caps."**

Jim Miller, author of several books on the TV industry, interviewed by The Wall Street Journal, as so many on-air people are broadcasting from home. "For those still broadcasting from real studios, the coronavirus hangs in the air as thick as the smell of disinfectant."

### **"Go potty and wash your hands then mommy will come downstairs."**

U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), who forgot to mute the Democratic Senate Caucus conference call she was on

### **"What an honor it is to be able to do this."**

Brittany Madera, morning host, localizing the pandemic story, at client station ConnectFM

### **"There is no reason to panic about supplies. Only panic buying causes shortages."**

Supermarket mogul John Catsimatridis, who recently bought WABC radio.

***"Did you know I was number one on Facebook? I just found out I'm number one on Facebook."***

The President, in his daily Pandemic briefing, April 1.



Rob Reiner   
@robreiner

The definition of a despicable human being: While thousands of people are dying you brag(lie) about your popularity on Facebook.

**"The network spent too long spraying its viewers with false information about the coronavirus pandemic."**

New York Times columnist Kara Swisher: "Fox's Fake News Contagion:"

"Many children of older parents have come to know this news diet as the equivalent of extreme senior sugar addiction mixed with a series of truly unpleasant and conspiracy-laden doughnuts. If Mom does not want coronavirus to be true, pablum from Fox News makes it easier. It's classic propaganda."

**"a campaign of deception and omission regarding the danger of the international proliferation of the novel coronavirus."**

Lawsuit against Fox News by Washington League for Increased Transparency and Ethics. Complaint names anchors Sean Hannity and Trish Regan, who it says "acted in bad faith to willfully and maliciously disseminate false information denying and minimizing the danger posed by the spread of the novel coronavirus."

**"We didn't elect a president to defer to a bunch of health experts that we don't know. And how do we know they're even health experts?"**

Rush Limbaugh

**"Whatever the science says is what we should do."**

Joe Biden

**"Our governor is a folk hero. You're on the phone, you see the briefing, you say, 'I gotta go, Cuomo's on.' By rising to the moment he has become a unifying force."**

Ronald Reagan's speechwriter Peggy Noonan, in her weekly WSJ column.

**"I would NEVER quarantine the Easter Bunny! He's 'Essential.'"**

Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo, responding to a concerned tot, during a daily briefing she devoted to answering questions Emailed by children. The First Gentleman read from some 13,000 received.

**PIERS MORGAN: In just five brief minutes of calm empathy, fortitude and history, the Queen inspired her people to overcome this coronavirus crisis better than President Trump has rallied Americans with 50 hours of rambling, self-promoting twaddle**

By Piers Morgan for MailOnline  
Updated at 2:09 PM on 6 April 2020



**"If we wait for a pandemic to appear, it will be too late to prepare."**

President George W. Bush, 2005, after reading John M. Barry's "The Great Influenza," the story of the 1918 pandemic.

"You've got to read this," Fran Townsend remembers the president telling her. "He said, 'Look, this happens every 100 years. We need a national strategy.'"

**"It doesn't have to be a mask. It can be a scarf. I think in a certain way, a scarf is better."**

President Trump