A photograph of a wooden desk with a silver MacBook Air, a red pencil case, a smartphone, and an open notebook with handwritten notes and diagrams. A white text box is overlaid on the notebook.

Step one:  
**INVOKE AUTHORITY**



In unsettling times of crisis, people will take comfort in authority. To invoke authority, make sure your language is precise and concise. Don't ramble. Inspire confidence by using clean sentences.

Resist the urge to use parentheses. If you need to qualify or explain what you're saying think hard about whether you really need to say it. And, here's a PR tip: don't fake it. If you can't say something authoritatively, it's not worth pretending. Getting found out will lose more trust than you stand to gain.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a silver tablet computer. The person is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, a silver ring on their left ring finger, and a black braided bracelet on their left wrist. The background is a blurred outdoor setting at night, featuring a grey railing and several warm, glowing bokeh lights from street lamps or buildings. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "Step two: COMMUNICATING".

Step two:  
**COMMUNICATING**



In a crisis, sometimes brands default to a stilted, scripted tone. There's misconception the gravity of the situation calls for "official sounding" communication. You know, the sort that mimics police speak: "we regret to inform individuals our stores are closed at the present time." Don't tense up like this. It will distance your audiences. Show you're tackling the issue by using energetic language.

Earn empathy by using warm language. So, try: "to keep you safe, we've moved online. In the meantime we're working on exciting new features to make sure we can welcome you back in store when the time is right."

... reported cases of the new coronavirus.

PHOTO COURTESY VIA GETTY IMAGES

The World Health Organization on Wednesday

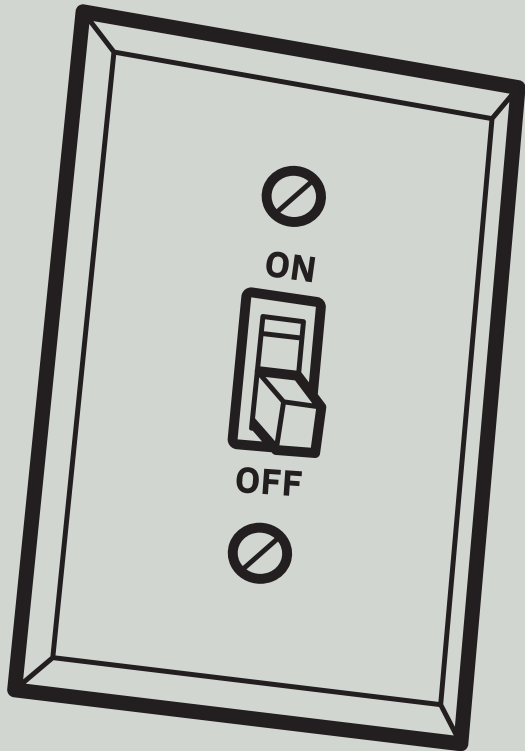
a pandemic, with the virus will spread

the globe.

Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said

"We expect to see the number of cases, the number of deaths

Step three:  
**PHRASING**



Try not to borrow phrasing from other brands, however tempting this can be. If you do this too much you'll risk sounding trite. Even worse, your audiences will ignore the message.

Having go-to references from other brands can be useful – but use them in moderation.

On a related style note, try not to open your comms by saying “in these unprecedented times” – people have read that hundreds of times now and you'll switch them off immediately.



Step four:  
**POSITIVE**





Sure you want to be positive, but don't be tone deaf. Come across too chipper and it will be irritating and jarring.

We've seen some brands try rallying cries – using combative language to urge a “fight” against the virus. The Foreign Secretary recently fell foul of this – alienating thousands of people who thought the image of the fight was tasteless.

A close-up, artistic photograph of a human eye. The eye is looking slightly to the right. The iris is a deep, dark blue, and the pupil is visible in the center. The eyelashes are dark and well-defined. The skin around the eye is a warm, light brown tone. A white rectangular text box is overlaid on the lower half of the eye, containing the text "Step five: HONESTY".

Step five:  
**HONESTY**



Honesty is the best policy. You might not have all the answers yet. Don't be tempted to bluff it. This crisis could be long term and you'll need to take your audiences with you. Give them reason to trust you.

Don't embellish, inform. Give your audiences useful information and they'll stay engaged.

If you want some help to find the right words,  
give us a call on 0191 375 9150.

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