

OOH in a pandemic: When crisis catalyses collaboration

By [Lizelle McConnell](#), issued by [Tractor Outdoor](#)

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When lockdown was first announced, out of home (OOH) advertisers reacted in panic, with campaigns withdrawn across the board - a scary time not only for our clients, but also for everyone who works in media sales.

The obvious reason was there's no way of communicating with consumers in an outdoor setting when audiences are told to stay at home. Yet there was also another reason, and it related to messaging - advertisers were worried about saying the right thing. Was it tone-deaf to drive sales in a time when the financial burden on consumers was set to increase? *Would consumers even care?*

While we have started to see the industry make a distinct and encouraging recovery - there's still some way to go before outdoor media enjoys the same demand as pre-Covid.

But I believe that this pandemic has a silver lining, and one that is extremely hopeful for the future of our industry. It has inspired the formation of new partnerships among those who were previously considered competitors, with innovation and collaboration being the order of the day.

The industry has realised that in order to survive, we as media owners must work together to identify creative solutions to the challenges we still face. This helps to promote the overall wellbeing of the category, and results in a robust, resilient industry.

Before the pandemic, there was little collaboration among industry players. This has finally started to change. We're seeing media owners share insights on trends, and they're helping one another by opening doors for up-and-comers within the industry.

I expect that the pressure faced by our sector will give rise to many more similar collaborations, and it's important that we extend this same spirit of collaboration to our clients. They have been under huge stress - revenue is down for many industries, and budgets across the board have been cut as businesses try to preserve liquidity. All of our clients to some extent are feeling the economic reverberations of consumers having less disposable income, and as job loss becomes more prevalent, so does the pressure on them increase.

I believe that putting yourself in the shoes of your clients through empathising with their challenges - and being a genuine partner to them in difficult circumstances - goes a long way towards solidifying the relationship. By supporting the clients who have been loyal to us over the years, we help them survive. They will remember this goodwill and will always consider us a partner - rather than just a platform they book via.

I would like to take the opportunity to say a huge thank you to our clients for trusting in us. They've inspired us with their ability to bounce back, and keep going despite the knocks to their businesses, as well as the personal challenges that they've faced. I am so thankful for the grace, guidance and support that they've given to our team.

I am also extremely grateful to my team who have inspired me with their positivity and tenacity. They've worked tirelessly together to overcome obstacles, and have tackled the difficulties we have encountered head on!

As an industry, I believe that we've shown incredible resilience and resourcefulness, and I've never been prouder to be part of the OOH family as I do now. I believe that by remaining agile, proactively seeking creative solutions to our challenges and, most importantly, through continuing to partner with one another, we will emerge far stronger than before.



About the author

Lizelle McConnell is the head of sales at Tractor Outdoor - one of SA's largest independent media owners, which specialises in connecting brands to consumers through its network of out of home (OOH) and digital out of home (DOOH) inventory.

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