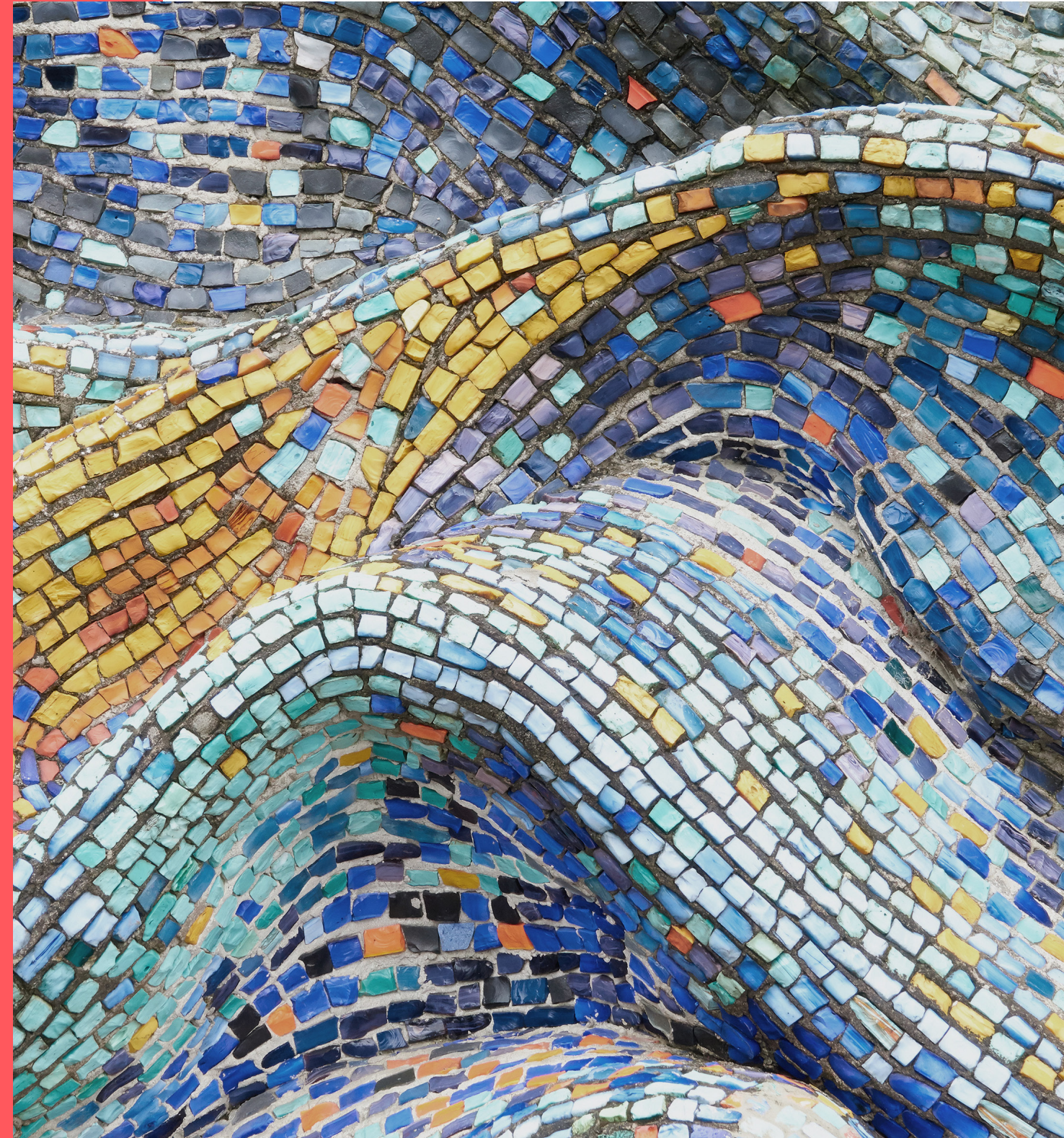


eGuide

# Five tips for how to collaborate during Covid-19, according to the experts







Collectively we are no strangers to lockdown, remote working and the uncertainty brought about by a global pandemic. As Heather Delaney, Founder and Managing Director of leading PR agency Gallium Ventures, puts it: “PR and marketing specialists tend to be social and there’s an expectation to go out and meet journalists and others in the industry. Being remote doesn’t help with winning new business and working alongside other teams. It’s a massive shift for the industry and for those who haven’t worked from home before.”

But business continues and PR teams must continue adapting and innovating to stay ahead of the competition. As the pandemic continues, businesses have been forced to adapt their strategies and how they work. Despite being no strangers to handling a crisis, comms teams are no exception to this. The ability to collaborate well is critical to safeguarding against disruption to business and to ensuring teams continue to operate both effectively and with a sense of normality.

In this eGuide, we’ve gathered tips from PR agency experts and from within Signal AI on how they’ve adapted to the new normal and give their tips for how best to operate as a PR team and collaborate with others.



## 1

## Delivering on PR objectives

**“PR folk in general are workhorses – give us a laptop and a decent internet connection, and we can work anywhere.”**

**Paul Wilke, CEO of Upright Position Communications**

While the upheaval across the world has changed how audiences behave and affected the media landscape, comms teams are used to adapting to accommodate different situations – particularly in agencies.

Instilling the idea of flexibility and empowering PR professionals to do their best work, regardless of the situation, has paid off for some. Paul Wilke, CEO at Upright Position Communications, says: “We were fortunate that we were a work-from-home agency before the pandemic by design. It’s always been important to me to work with PR professionals who are empowered and get the work done without requiring time or location boundaries. Many of our clients didn’t have work from home cultures, so there was a two to three week period where you could feel them get their sea-legs in what has become the norm now.”

By operating at as close to usual capacity as possible, comms teams can help steady the ship in a time of crisis. And by harnessing their innate ability to talk to people in a way they understand, communicators can facilitate collaboration beyond just their team members. Paul Wilke again: “I think the more collaboration the better, whether it’s across teams, with clients or directly with journalists. There’s no sense wasting time on an idea or a strategy, only to find out after everything’s in place, that there’s not a journalist on the planet interested in it. A timely placed call with a reporter to say, ‘Hey, we’re working on this thing... if it came across your desk, would you be interested hypothetically?’”

This type of working also applies to internal activities, such as coverage reports. Using an AI-powered tool that helps collect information in less time means the team can spend more time on high-value activities – particularly in the agency world. Demetrius White, Account Executive for agencies at Signal AI, says: “With a quarterly or monthly report, a tool like Workspaces means you centrally collate all the information, as opposed to people using dense spreadsheets and potentially duplicating information. The whole team can work in one place, meaning it’s easier to collaborate. By alleviating the time it usually takes for this, people can focus on more strategic activities like new business pitches or developing new PR plans for their clients.”



## 2 Operating as a strategic function

“Applying data-led reputational insight drives understanding from the C-suite and Board of the reputational effects of some of their most important decisions. When it comes to making key decisions, the C-suite has a trusted advisor in the form of their CCO or comms team.” Georgie Weedon, Head of Communications at Signal AI

A recent survey by Korn Ferry, found Fortune 500 CEOs expect Chief Communications Officers to act as high-level strategic advisors and

in turn CCOs expect their teams to operate as a strategic function. In times of turbulence, leadership needs advice on strategy and reputation. With busy schedules and plenty of fires to fight, the ability to communicate to leadership is surely difficult. But PR teams can still meet this demand during lockdown.

With insights gathered from an AI-powered monitoring and intelligence tool, comms teams can collaborate with leadership by enhancing their decision making around reputation.



For example, leadership can be sent a briefing detailing their perception around key issues, the areas of opportunity – or indeed obstacles – worth considering or societal trends around corporate purpose.

Giving leadership an edge by helping them to understand the effect of business decisions on reputation and, in turn, help lower business disruption. Theresa Souza, Head of Sales Americas at Signal AI, says: “We’re seeing a shift in focus by comms teams to understand the evolution of corporate purpose and how other companies are reacting to that. This is a real collaborative exercise but it’s only really possible with the right data and that topical extraction from AI, otherwise it would simply take too long.”

Comms teams that align with company goals, and collaborate with leadership, are built for success, as Paul Wilke puts it: “For every business problem, there’s a PR-based solution. It might not fix everything, but if a company’s comms team isn’t aware of or talking about business issues, then they’re just a “promotions” department, and in today’s climate, that won’t translate into sustainable, useful media coverage.”

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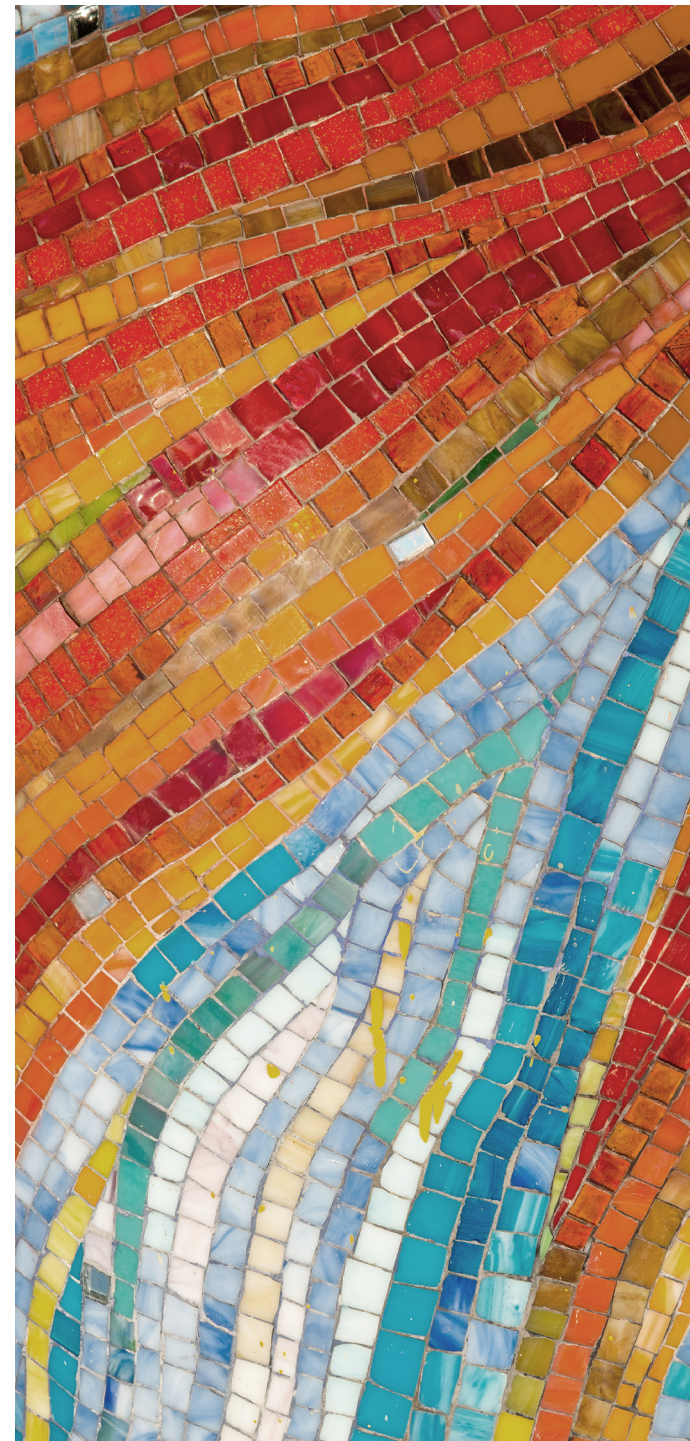




# 3 Collaborating with other departments

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**Theresa Souza, Head of Sales Americas at Signal AI**



In our previous eGuide on [safeguarding the future of a business](#), we mentioned how PR teams can enable better decisions across the business with a comprehensive media monitoring product.

Searching through topics and entities with an AI-powered tool slashes the time it takes to gather key information. PR teams can provide this market intelligence to other departments to help them operate more effectively at a time when businesses need to be agile.

Tom Denn, Head of Financial Services at Signal AI says: “Right now, it’s not all about your competition. People care about the industry landscape and how wider news might affect how they or their clients work. For example, I know a comms team that was able to provide crucial information to an investment team that helped them make a better decision than one they may have ended up regretting.”

But comms teams ability to collaborate with other teams isn’t just limited to sharing information. With an eye on the industry and knowing the activities of teams in marketing and events, comms can act as a conduit. This means less duplication of activities and teams working together towards shared business goals.

Gallium Ventures’ Heather Delaney says: “Since the beginning we’ve always worked as an internal team with our clients so we’re essentially part of the business. We have a better understanding of what is working and what needs to change. In many companies, departments can be siloed instead of looking at what each space is doing and how they can work together. We often find ourselves becoming the internal team that pulls people together to collaborate better.”



# 4 Providing a sense of purpose through brand messaging

“PR’s role in providing a sense of unity is invaluable, when done correctly. Making sure employees and stakeholders are adequately informed with regard to what’s going on is the only way people aren’t going to feel isolated or ill-informed.” Paul Wilke, CEO of Upright Position Communications

We all know how our individual working environments have changed dramatically since the adoption of remote working. Children and pets emerging on video calls, the beep of an empty dishwasher,

a colleague accidentally leaving laundry up in the background: things we’ve all seen in the last nine months when we’re collaborating with teammates. In every department across every organization, leaders have had to consider how to ensure colleagues still feel a sense of unity to the business.

Comms teams have a vital role in providing this cohesion. The workforce can feel a sense of loyalty to the organization through a strong brand message based on a set of core values.

Signal AI’s Tom Denn says: “Many brands want to show they’re forward thinking and care about people at a time like this, and some do this by looking to invest in social initiatives. Communicating this in the right way can show employees they work for a brand they’re proud of. For example, [Bank of America’s](#) \$1bn investment to fight racial inequality was a big move that speaks to their values and can make its workers feel a sense of pride towards the brand.”

Company output that shows the brand in a strong light can inspire a sense of pride from employees. But to bridge the gaps created by not working together in an office, comms can go one further by implementing effective internal communications plans to ensure colleagues feel informed.





# 5 Using tech that makes isolation feel manageable

“People are getting video overload thanks to the use of video calls throughout the entirety of the day, meaning you end up in call after call without getting the meaningful work in your day job done.” Heather Delaney, Gallium Ventures

With teams needed to collaborate while working from home, tech solutions have naturally been sought to help people work together. Whether it's Zoom calls, Microsoft teams, Google docs or Slack, every team has utilised them to help bring people together. Most of these solutions have been used previously, but the great change has come in how often they're used and how our schedules are built around using them.

How different tools can be implemented is subjective, but accommodating the different circumstances of team members is critical to a sense of harmony. Paul Wilke says: “Not every team meeting needs to be a Zoom call, nor do we need to put everything in an email. You develop a natural cadence for what works for a given team and you adapt. We're also not in a 9 to 5 world anymore, but we shouldn't expect that everyone's on the same time schedule, whether it's one's own circadian rhythms or because of child care or because of the natural fatigue that comes with living in the COVID-19 era.”



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For comms teams, any tool that helps people collaborate and share information quickly and easily means more time to react. **Signal AI** has responded to this recent shift in workflow to put collaboration at the heart of the platform. In-house comms leaders can share Workspaces across teams, and time zones, while PR and communications agencies can create [Workspaces](#) for individual clients and share critical information across teams working remotely.

Heather Delaney of Gallium Ventures says: “The tech you use comes down to the nature of your business and you have to adapt to what fits your clients needs. Anything

you use that can provide easy access to clients is a good thing, and they will greatly appreciate it, as the current situation we all find ourselves has made a number teams look at their software and prioritise where they’re spending their money. Things like **Signal AI** are really beneficial as it cuts down the time needed to find information to share with clients, and it can help us give access to clients to all information they need.”

In these unprecedented times, collaborating as a team while working remotely is more important than ever. Comms teams can be the glue that binds an organization and collaborate not only with each other but

with other departments to work towards shared business objectives. Collaborating is part and parcel of agency life and integral to living up to and going beyond client expectations, but it is made more difficult by the adoption of widespread remote working. **Signal AI** has responded to this recent shift in workflow to put collaboration at the heart of the platform with the introduction of Workspaces.

With the ability to collaborate on a greater scale, comms professionals at agencies and in organizations can help their businesses survive and thrive during this global pandemic.