



# Brand-Building During Rapid Cultural Change

Communication is always a challenge, especially when you need to convey difficult messages or ask for compliance. At M&C Communications, we help clients learn how to *move the stairs* and develop messages to create results: change, compliance, action, whatever the goal may be. Messaging during rapid cultural change, whether you are talking about the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Me Too Movement, the mask mandates vs First Amendment rights controversy or other hot-button issues, how you communicate with your employees, clients and colleagues is extremely important.

## No Messaging Is a Message

Many business owners are asking: *how can I support the Black Lives Matter movement?* Saying nothing is often assumed to support the status quo, which may or may not be your position. If you want to take a stand for change the question is, how do you do it authentically and not in a “jumping on the bandwagon moment?” Is it enough to post something like the black square that was used to demonstrate support on Blackout Tuesday in June? How will your employees react if they know that in supporting a cultural change you aren’t being authentic because of what goes on inside your business? Take a look at this interesting interview with the writer of *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo (which is on the New York Times Bestseller List) and the [Mercer Island Group](#) on the topic.

## Respond Appropriately

Fortunately, communication experts are starting to weigh in on the question: *what can I do to support the Black Lives Matter movement?* [The Leeds School of Business at CU Boulder has a great report on Black Lives Matter Brand Responses](#) that looks at what top brands have done. Here is an overview of authentic ways to support cultural change:

- **Invest in Action** - Donate to causes that are combating racial injustice and inequality. Let your customers know that you are supporting these groups and encourage them to join us.
- **Ritualize Commitments** - Look for opportunities to get involved in a more long-term strategy to work towards solutions to racial injustice in your community. Your commitment should not be a one and done. Ben & Jerry’s have been publicly supporting the Black Lives Matter movement for 4 years.
- **Outline Internal Policies** - Showcase what you are doing within your company to combat racism. You can start by acknowledging where your company is at

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now, what you are learning during this time and specific time goals to accomplish your change.

- **Re-Evaluate your brand** - during the height of a cultural change, would it make sense to pause your current brand message and pivot to something more appropriate?
- **Fix and Re-tool Product** - Is there something you can do with your product or service that would make it more inclusive of other communities or responsive to the changing cultural norm?

## How do you increase diversity in the workplace?

The [Racial Equity Toolkit](#) published by the Government Alliance on Racial Equity provides fabulous resources and asks insightful questions when you are thinking about developing or becoming involved in a program designed to address inequality.

## Self Reflection

I love this quote that I talked about last week from an interview I heard on the [Build a Better Agency Podcast from Jennifer Long, an employment attorney, and discrimination complaint investigator](#). [“The tool you need is humility. Let your defenses down. You can say that was the perspective I had before, it is not the perspective I have now. Here is what I am going to do now with my new perspective.”](#)

How important is humility and in this whole discussion? How do we move from thinking, *I am a good person therefore I have no prejudices*, to the idea that being a good person means *I am willing to consider that I have a perspective that I may not even realize could be ingrained with prejudice*. It is not tied to being a good person or a bad person. Now I will be judged by what I do with my new perspective.

Whatever the situation you are in, and cultural change is no exception. Remember to use the 4 C's: Clear, Compassionate, Consistent, and Conversational communication to have the greatest impact, whether you're communicating in person, through email, websites, or social media. It is important to think through these communication challenges, have a plan, protect your brand, and build your business community.