

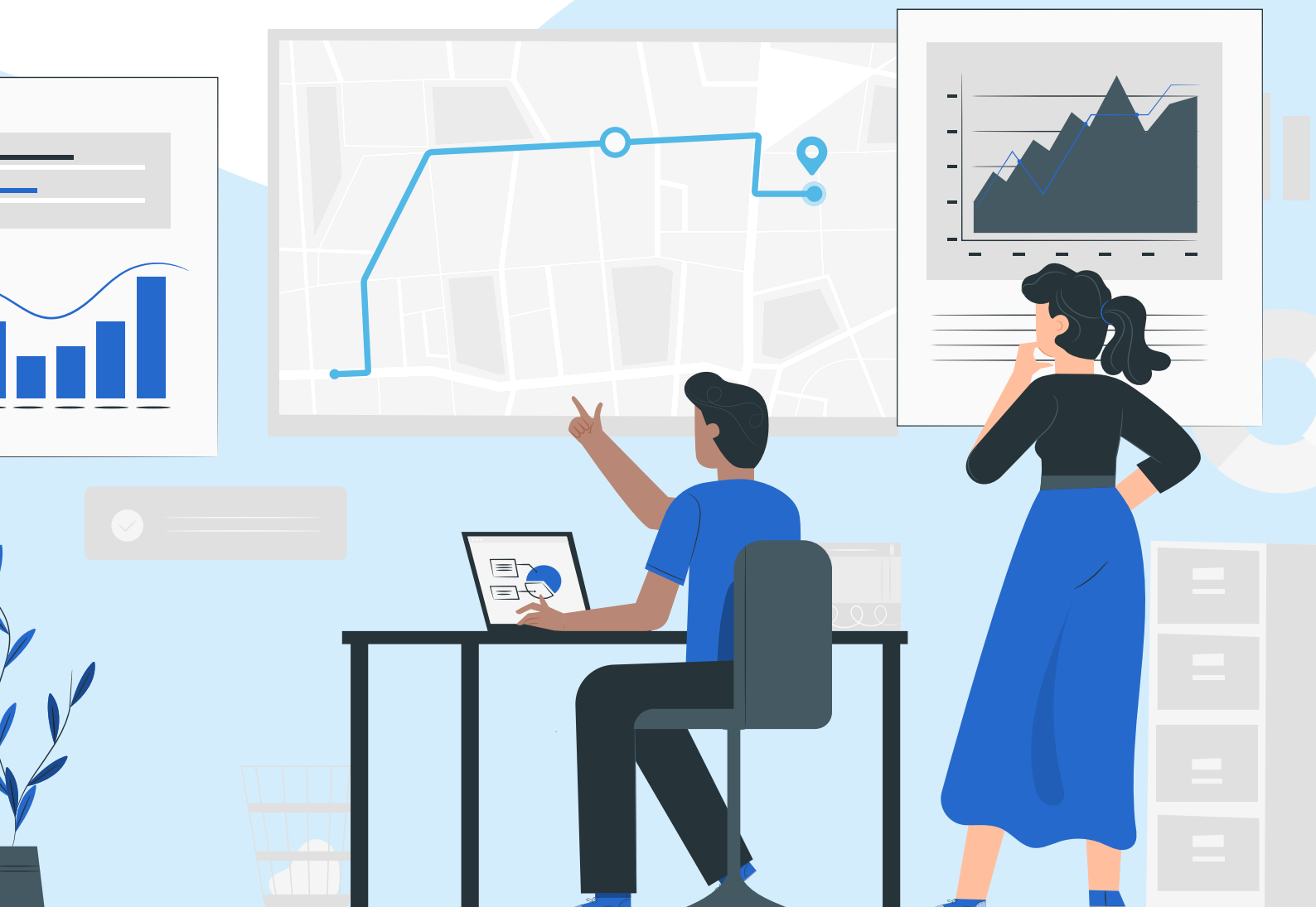


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# The LMC Roadmap to Recovery:

## Using Strategic Communications to Help Construction Build Back Better

October 2020





## INTRODUCTION

**In June 2020 the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) published its [Roadmap to Recovery](#).**

**Designed to set the framework for construction's response to Covid-19, it inspired us to think about our own [Roadmap to Recovery for the industry](#).**

Because from our perspective, many industry reports miss a vital ingredient - the role of strategic communication in driving change.

So here's our version to help rebalance the situation.

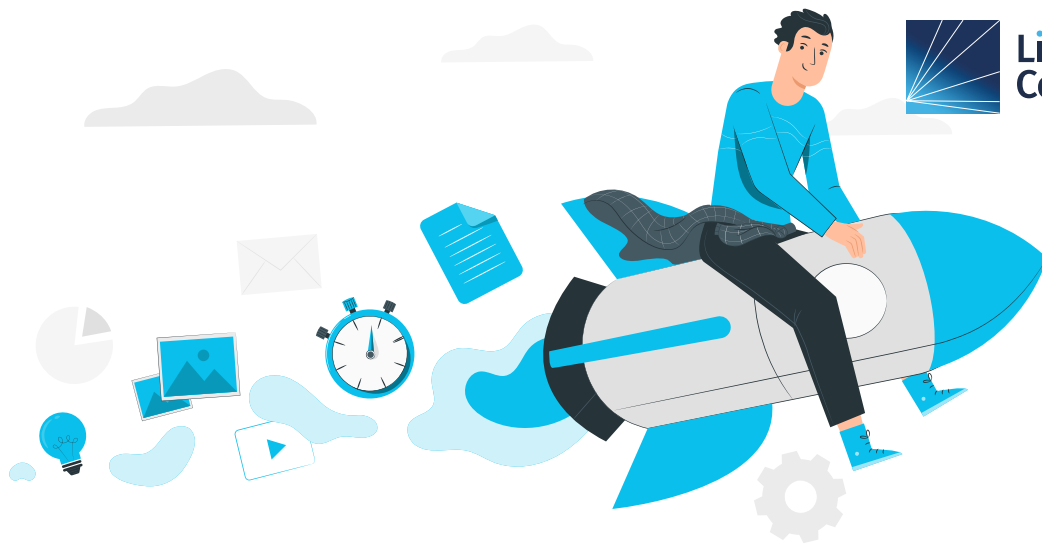
In this report, we will suggest the areas that organisations should focus on when it comes to their communications so that they can emerge from this crisis in a stronger position than when they went in.

From restarting your marketing when times are hard to reinventing your business for the future, there are practical steps available today.

We hope you find it useful and we welcome your feedback.

[Join the #RoadmapToRecovery discussion on our LinkedIn page.](#)

*“...many industry reports miss a vital ingredient - the role of strategic communication in driving change.”*



## RESTART:

### Build on the positives and prepare your business for the months ahead

#### CLC Roadmap to Recovery Key Points

- Get projects up and running again quickly
- Maximise employment opportunities
- Minimise disruption from disputes

**According to the timescales within the CLC's Roadmap to Recovery, the 'Restart' phase is supposedly already done. Most construction sites have been back up and running since May, helped by regular guidance from industry bodies and membership groups, including the [Site Operating Procedures](#) published by the CLC.**

So with construction still operational despite new restrictions and local lockdowns, you could be forgiven for skipping ahead to the next phase of the Roadmap. However, it is important to take stock first.

This is an important moment, both because of how it can help us now and because it is likely that Covid-19

will remain a threat for some time to come. As communications and marketing professionals in the industry, we still have work to complete in this 'Restart' phase.

#### It's all about the learning

There will undoubtedly be lessons learned from this period. What was done well in terms of internal and external communications? How did your website and other communication mechanisms hold up? What should be replicated and maintained for the future? Let's not move ahead too fast without a moment of reflection.

On employee communications, it has become clear that remote working can be productive, that online communication with a disparate workforce is more effective than expected and that, when pushed, it is possible to rollout technology and new ways of working much faster than previously thought possible.

Many of the internal communication changes were achieved pretty quickly in lockdown. There are useful lessons to be gained from looking at what worked best in your organisation during the early days of the crisis, when so many activities were put on hold and capacity was lost as staff were furloughed.

The next step is to reflect on any

successes and then share them. Telling your staff, customers and even the wider industry about what you've learned will make the positives stick. It may also provide the playbook for any future crises.

#### Time for communication

If you have not started already, you need to be telling your customers and other stakeholders that not only are you open for business, but you are already gearing up for life post-Covid.

Avoid talking about "returning to normal" though. It is important to acknowledge the changes forced upon us all. Be upfront about any limitations that you are facing so that you can successfully manage expectations.

At the same time, you will also need to build confidence that you are well prepared for the next stage (whatever that may be), even if it is going to involve some work to get there. It's important not to talk ourselves down.

Most of all, don't go quiet. The rumour mill is in full force right now. Are companies struggling? Are redundancies worse than expected? Are projects being pulled? An old adage of communication is that, if there is a vacuum (i.e. you are not saying anything), someone else



will fill it. You need to make sure that you are the single source of truth for your customers, suppliers, employees and their families – keep them informed of what you are doing and how it impacts on them.

It will help you to build and maintain your connections, networks and supply chains, essential in times of difficulty.

### **Reflect on your achievements**

It is also important to look at any case studies you can develop as a result of this 'Restart' period.

In the construction industry there have been many examples of the supply chain coming together and delivering great results, despite the restrictions that Covid-19 caused.

One of the major feelgood stories was obviously the [NHS Nightingale](#) initiative which saw a number of temporary hospitals delivered in a matter of weeks. It showed the best

of what construction has to offer – creativity, flexibility and collaboration, underpinned by successful delivery.

Now is the time to share your own coronavirus successes, and to celebrate the people within your organisation who went above and beyond to help others during the crisis.

In particular, take this time to remember, recognise and reward the acts of kindness and helpfulness that have taken place, and which are still going on.

The media still wants to hear about the positive ways that companies dealt with coronavirus, as well as get a sense of what is happening now and what is likely to happen next.

Any PR content you do create can be used for your own channels too, either to promote internally, through social media or in direct communication with your relevant audiences. Even a short

blog or simple video story is a good place to start.

Have a think about how you and your team have innovated and adapted this year and tell that story too. It will help provide a solid foundation for the next step and the ultimate aim of the CLC's Roadmap – modernising the industry so that it delivers better, safer buildings for our communities.

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# RESET: How to drive culture change from the inside out

## CLC Roadmap to Recovery Key Points

- A robust pipeline for work across all markets
- Productivity improvements
- More training, collaboration, fairer contracts and prompt payment

**If you follow the timeline, the 'Reset' phase of the CLC's Roadmap to Recovery is where we are supposed to be right now.**

This phase is built on an expectation of increasing workloads and a robust pipeline of contracts across all four key parts of the construction 'ecosystem'. Indeed, we do seem to be seeing encouraging levels of activity currently across infrastructure, construction, housing and RMI (repair, maintenance and improvement work).

But the 'Reset' phase is not just about being busy. It also calls for some substantial cultural changes in the construction industry, including new approaches to productivity and professionalism.

Vitally, this phase of recovery is also very much focused on people. It talks about investment in skills and training, apprenticeships and professional competence, digital upskilling and occupational health and safety, including an absolutely essential focus on mental health. If you are active in these areas, you need to promote it better than ever before.

### Agile collaboration

One of the other major expectations is around the construction industry demonstrating a more collaborative approach. That's a call that has been echoing across the industry for decades.

There are now examples of collaborative business models in both public and private sector construction, although admittedly nowhere near enough. But crises can be a real spur to collaboration,

based on a realisation that, in the face of danger, we stand a better chance of survival by working together than trying to go it alone.

Indeed, what is notable about the CLC's Roadmap is how the plan itself came together: industry leaders collaborating with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to pull together a plan everyone could get behind, and in a very short space of time. In the face of the national lockdown, diaries were cleared, new relationships formed and creative solutions were identified through a programme of daily calls and online meetings.

What if this agile collaborative approach was applied to the other major challenges in the industry?

As strategic advisers to the industry, we are seeking out these opportunities. It's about using communications and PR to signal to other change-makers in construction and the built environment that the door is open to new ways of working.



## Getting vocal about the big issues

'Reset' also means ensuring that our sector's recovery sticks firmly to the country's longer-term social, technological and environmental goals.

For example, in the face of the global pandemic and likely recession, the climate emergency could easily have been forgotten. Positively, one of the strongest outcomes and benefits of the recovery plan is dedicated to reducing carbon emissions, achieving our net zero goals and improving the sustainability and resource efficiency of the construction and built environment sectors.

This is one of the most valuable areas for industry communications during this phase too. Decarbonisation is big news and any steps that you are taking in this area are opportunities to build your profile and positive reputation.

The other big areas of Government and industry interest are also laid out in the recovery plan, including increasing prosperity across all parts of the UK (the 'levelling up' agenda), modernisation of the industry through the uptake of digital and manufacturing technologies, and the delivery of better, safer buildings.

If you want to know the big issues and strategic priorities for construction PR for the next couple of years at least, they're all spelled out in the Roadmap.

## Giving a voice to the excluded

How else can we use our communications expertise to help 'reset' the industry?

Sadly, one of the key issues not addressed directly in the Roadmap is the need to improve equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in construction. We can and must do something about this.

In recent months, the Black Lives Matter movement has helped to highlight racism, inbuilt bias, microaggressions and unfair systems that blight the path

of a construction professional if they are a person of colour. Prejudice and discrimination also destroy the careers of many other groups, depriving the industry of vital talent.

Many construction employers say that they understand that diversity matters, from both a moral point of view and a business perspective. But still the approach to addressing EDI issues seems to lack deep and urgent understanding. Strategic communication professionals in construction can play an important role here, because the first rule of effective communications is to listen. The industry needs to work together to listen and genuinely try to understand the experiences of workers of Black or minority ethnic heritage, and all minority groups, so that better and faster decisions can be made to create an equal and prosperous working environment.

In-depth interviews, surveys and employee workshops all offer a potential route towards better understanding. Thereafter, case studies and the active promotion of Black and minority voices in construction can help get the message across that this is an industry where all are welcome. Within every construction organisation the opportunities exist to accelerate the journey towards improved diversity.

## Review your positioning

Finally, it's worth noting that this 'Reset' phase is also the point at which to review brand positioning, marketing and messaging. Take another look at:

**Company vision and values:** are your purpose statement and value proposition (what you stand for, why you do what you do and how you deliver value to customers) still appropriate? Or has Covid-19 led to a fundamental shift in your business? If so, you may need to reposition your company in the eyes of your key

stakeholders. Society is increasingly looking to companies to drive positive social impact. Share your values and commitment to creating a more environmentally responsible, resilient and fair construction industry. If you are taking a stand you are more likely be included in the conversations that drive cultural change not only within your company but across the whole industry.

**Messaging:** is your messaging still appropriate? As well as reviewing this at the top level, you should also look carefully at any existing or scheduled campaigns. The tone will likely need to change to reflect the current situation, which is still vulnerable to very sudden changes.

**Content channels:** look at the communications channels you use, the relevance of the audiences and your engagement and conversion rates.

**Resource:** do you use a marketing or communications agency, an in-house team, or a combination of the two? Whatever your set-up, do you have the right balance of skills in place for your business in a changing market?

**Budgets:** look at your communications tools and whether they are fit for purpose and offer value for money. If not, now is a good time to look at other vendors.

**Evaluation:** check that everything you are doing is delivering value. Measure return on investment by looking at outcomes, not just outputs. Demand [more intelligent evaluation](#) from your marketing and PR teams.

Use this phase to kickstart the work that builds a stronger, more positive image for construction. This will be critical if we are to attract new talent into the industry to address the future skills shortages which, recovery or not, we know we have to tackle fast.

Our next chapter looks at that issue more closely.

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## RESET: How to attract people into your business and ensure they have the right skills

**The construction industry employs more than 2.3 million people across the UK. But that number is likely to change, as many job losses are feared from this autumn.**

By the end of June 2020, over 752,000 employees from within the industry were furloughed with 75% of employers within the sector making use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Given the fact that a return to full productivity and output may still be out of reach for many contractors and housebuilders, it looks inevitable that many workers may lose their jobs. We may even lose them from the industry for good.

Unsurprisingly then, the 'Reset' phase within the Roadmap to Recovery puts a huge emphasis on maximising

employment of all those working in the construction industry and supply chain.

The government has jumped in with funding for kickstarter jobs and work experience, a new Jobs Support Scheme and financial bonuses to employers for job retention, as well as help for the self-employed. In July, the CLC launched the [Construction Talent Retention Scheme](#), aimed at helping people who have been made redundant or are at risk of redundancy within construction to find new jobs.

### Employer branding

This 'Reset' phase is the time to re-evaluate your employer brand.

It is important to think carefully about how you want to present yourself as an employer. This goes further

than promoting your corporate size or status. You need to consider the messaging, imagery and tone of voice you use on your website, social media and through all your internal and outbound communication channels.

Engage with your existing staff so that they become advocates for your company. Create case studies and stories about your employees on your website. Include people at all levels and in all parts of the business to give a well-rounded view of what it is like to work for your organisation. Share what makes your organisation such a great place to work, and how you care about employees and their personal growth, success and happiness.

Showcase the types of people you want to have in your organisation not only in the job advertisement, but also on your company website.



Include short video interviews with staff about how your company has adapted throughout coronavirus and how you are approaching new ways of working. And do not forget to make this as diverse a picture as possible – double down on efforts to show equality, diversity and inclusion in action, particularly at recruitment stage.

### **Prepare your platforms**

No matter where you post a vacancy, one of the first things any candidate will do is have a look at your website to get a feel for the company and the people who work there. They may check out sites like Glassdoor and LinkedIn to see what other employees say about the business.

Make it as easy as possible for people to understand your culture. It is likely to be the difference between them applying to work with you or going elsewhere. Set up a dedicated area on your website

about working for your organisation that includes information on any employee benefits and key policies. Make this information available as a downloadable employee pack and candidates will have a helpful resource that they can revisit.

Don't just post the vacancy on one platform. Use social media to reach a wider range of people. There are lots of Twitter and LinkedIn accounts (such as [Women into Construction](#) and [Go Construct](#)) that sometimes share vacancies or can offer some good advice for recruiting. You can also use hashtags like #ConstructLondon or other regional campaigns to help boost your reach.

On LinkedIn, use your personal networks to share company updates and ask your employees to do the same. Look for LinkedIn Groups that may be able to help and don't be afraid to ask your network to share their own experiences with

recruiting. That said, don't opt for a scattergun approach and join TikTok just because that's the latest thing. Do your research and pick relevant platforms that your ideal candidates use.

### **Recruiting in a Covid world**

Clearly, there is going to be a level of uncertainty for some time, but recruitment can't be put on hold forever. Bring people into your team who are willing to embrace change and are quick to adapt.

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that (when it wants to) the construction industry can be very flexible and innovative. So above all, your employees need to have similar qualities to help your organisation grow and thrive in the months and years ahead.

## REINVENT:

### So you're an innovator. How do you sell your vision to the sector?

#### CLC Roadmap to Recovery Key Points

- Transformation through innovation and MMC
- Better value and whole life performance
- Partnerships and leadership

**For organisations driven by a clear agenda for change and ready to pursue their purpose, the Roadmap to Recovery's 'Reinvent' phase is written for you. The CLC is urging you to promote your work across three key themes: transformation, value and partnerships.**

Political kudos is particularly being given to those in construction who are adopting digital and manufacturing technologies to transform the industry and the wider built environment, and who are at the same time delivering strategic objectives on net zero, levelling up and building safety. The potential efficiencies created by these technologies are estimated to be worth somewhere between £7bn and £15bn a year.

Offsite construction is therefore one of the most obvious celebrities of the 'Reinvent' phase and is likely to remain highly newsworthy for at least the next couple of years.

Procurement is also highlighted as critical for this phase, with a lot of interest in the Construction Innovation Hub's [Value Toolkit](#) to encourage procurement for the right outcomes and best value, not just lowest cost.



Post-Grenfell, this is a narrative that we all hope will be sustained. The Value Toolkit will become a suite of robust and practical tools that will enable evidence-based decision-making across the whole investment lifecycle. It has the potential to act as a catalyst to change behaviour from the top to bottom of the industry.

Also in 'Reinvent' is a big push for energy efficiency, and a reminder of all the earlier themes in the Roadmap, including collaboration, training and safety. There are many opportunities here to take a leadership position.

#### Telling the story of reinvention

So who will be remembered as the heroes of the 'Reinvent' phase? How will the new ideas and innovations tip over into mass market adoption and deliver lasting change in the industry? That, to a large extent, depends upon effective communication.

We know that there are already many companies, joint ventures and industry groups getting on with transformation. Spurred on by the saying 'never let a good crisis go to waste', they have progressed their plans with extra vigour over the lockdown period.



If you are one of those organisations, intelligent PR, targeted digital communication and meaningful stakeholder engagement will play a pivotal role in establishing your leadership status.

Here are some tips on maximising the marketing potential of your initiatives in the true spirit of the Roadmap to Recovery:

**Where possible, tell the story collaboratively:** A tale of innovation works best when it is told from multiple perspectives, stressing the benefits for all parts of the supply chain. It avoids a story like this becoming perceived as high risk or out of reach to others. To be able to change and grow as an industry, we cannot continue to operate in our individual silos. We need to communicate and share our best practice much better. By sharing our stories of success (and lessons learned from failure too), we help to 'shrink the change' and make it feel more achievable by everyone.

**Tell the story visually:** Seeing is believing, so seek out additional opportunities for video, animations and infographics.

**Build in some emotion:** Change is not easy, and like every great episode of Grand Designs there is always the moment of 'jeopardy' – the point where everything looks like it may go to pot. If you want your story to be memorable, don't leave out the suspense! Take your reader on a journey and position your customer as the hero of the story.

**Look for virtual networks to help spread your knowledge and insights:** Traditionally trade shows, industry events, conferences, exhibitions and awards have been ideal venues to showcase new ideas and to build new contacts and relationships that can move things forward. But with so many face-to-face opportunities and events curtailed for now, this networking has moved online. Make use of online events, webinars and podcasts instead, all of which have boomed during lockdown.

**If in doubt, LinkedIn is a great place to start:** Regular posts with pictures or video clips that communicate what you are trying to do (and why) are likely to generate a lot of interest. If you do get comments make sure that you respond to them and follow up expressions of interest. This is a relatively easy way to build up your contacts, expand your network and showcase your expertise.

**Harness the influence of your trade association, professional institute or other membership body:** Industry groups have played an important part in continuing the CLC's work and many are involved in the sectoral working groups that will drive forward implementation of the recovery plan. Look for opportunities to share your stories of reinvention through their communications channels too.

Most importantly, our message is to start building your communication plan now. The successful delivery of the recovery depends upon it.

## REINVENT:

# Phoenix rising: How strong leadership can deliver transformative change

Despite the tremendous personal, social and economic costs of Covid-19 (or arguably, directly because of these things), the pandemic has acted as a massive accelerant for business creativity and reinvention.

Boardrooms within the construction sector are notoriously conservative and the traditional culture has always been risk averse.

But judging by some of our recent conversations with business leaders, interest in change and what many would consider 'new ideas' is probably now at its highest level in 30 years. Some businesses are getting there already, keen to emerge faster and stronger.

This is good. Because once we add the inevitable impact of Brexit and the global economic shock of a post-pandemic world, change is no longer a question of why or when, it's a question of who and how.

### Supporting inspirational leaders

Most important of all, let's look at the 'who'. Now more than ever, we need strong, inspirational and high-profile leaders.

Do you have a positive attitude, resilience, vision and a sense of purpose to change the industry for the better? Now is the time for you to build your profile and lead people into action.

Positivity helps to bring energy back into the industry and is a much-needed medicine right now. Maintaining a positive attitude and communicating well is not about puff, nor is it about pretending everything is rosy. We can't spin our way out of a recession. Great leaders need enthusiasm tempered with a good dollop of realism. But let's be clear: cynics do not make visionary



leaders. Cynics drain confidence, particularly in difficult times.

Instead, great leaders create communities of optimism and shared interest. Critically, they take people with them on a journey, by sharing their stories and experience.

Business leaders listen well, have empathy, and communicate a clear and purposeful direction using evidence and proof points, and help others to find their own solutions too.

PR is a strategic management discipline that is embraced by all great leaders. It builds understanding and trust, and helps organisations articulate and achieve their purpose.

**We stand ready to help you.**

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## The LMC Roadmap to Recovery checklist

### RESTART

- On internal communications, review what worked best in your organisation during lockdown.
- Reflect on what worked well and what didn't.
- Consider sharing your experience with others, via blog posts, in presentations or in talks with staff, so that everyone learns from it.
- Remind customers and suppliers that not only are you open for business, but you're getting ready for the next phase of change.
- Avoid talking about 'returning to normal'.
- Don't go quiet – the rumour mill will fill gaps with unhelpful speculation.
- Celebrate the kindness and helpfulness of your people.
- Talk about how you have adapted to the new world.

### RESET

- Make a point of promoting your investment in your people, their training, skills and welfare, including mental health.
- Talk about your new approaches to productivity and professionalism.
- Signal to the wider industry if you're up for 'agile collaboration' to tackle big issues.
- Share your journey towards decarbonisation and environmental sustainability.
- Facilitate deeper engagement with your colleagues to explore practical opportunities to tackle racism and improve equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Review your purpose statement and value proposition.
- Update your messaging, communications channels and resourcing to match your needs in a changing market.
- Demand better evaluation and measurement of outcomes.
- Re-evaluate your employer brand so that you're ready to attract and retain the best people for the future.
- Explore new routes for recruitment campaigns to reach a more diverse talent pool.

### REINVENT

- Promote your commitment to MMC and digital technologies, improved procurement, net zero, levelling up and building safety.
- Tell stories of transformation.
- Tell them collaboratively.
- Share your experiences honestly and openly to help 'shrink the change'.
- Use visual communication techniques.
- Build in suspense and emotion to make your stories more memorable.
- Use virtual networks, social networks and digital communications to help spread knowledge and insights.
- Tap into the networks offered by membership bodies too.
- Most importantly, harness optimism, positivity and step up to a leadership role.
- Call us – we're here to help the change-makers.

## CONCLUSION

**There is no doubt that 2020 has been one of the most difficult years in living memory. The business, economic, social and individual impacts and challenges will continue well into the coming months and years.**

But as a society and as an industry, we do collectively have the skills, knowledge and experience to build our way out of this crisis.

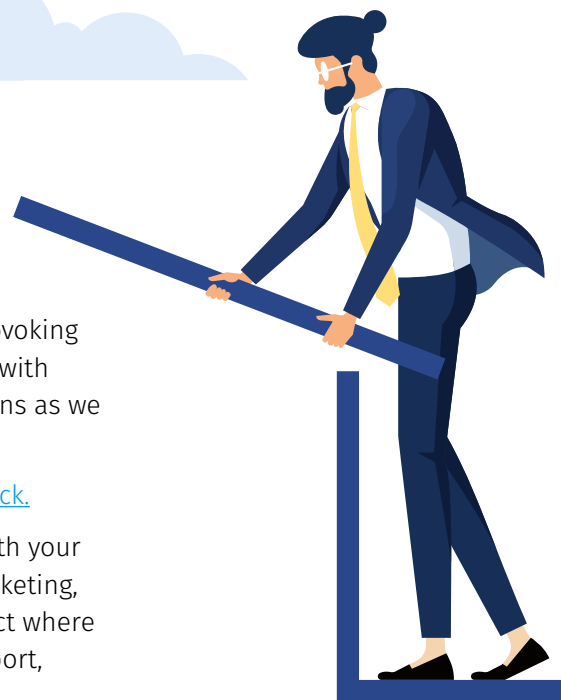
Positivity, resilience and a willingness to learn and try new things will be essential to our success. Working together to find solutions and celebrating our collaborative successes will be key to maintaining motivation and momentum.

We hope this report has provided some inspiration and guidance, both

practical tips and thought-provoking ideas, to help you get started with improving your communications as we look to the future.

[We'd love to hear your feedback.](#)

And if you need some help with your business strategy, PR and marketing, or if you have a specific project where you need extra advice or support, then do [get in touch](#).



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