

# Courage, audacity and resilience

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Camden's practical guide to marketing  
in times of crisis

April 2, 2020



# Courage, audacity and resilience

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“In good times, people want to advertise; in bad times, they have to.”

— Bruce Barton

Slashing ad spend during an economic downturn or health scare seems like a reasonable move – but with so many factors at play, it can be a recipe for disaster. Advertisers should carefully consider their position within the market and their industry before pulling the proverbial trigger. The fact is, as brick and mortar locations are shuttered and events cancelled, the need for an online presence has never been greater.

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# Why should I stay the course?



## Build trust

Brands are about trust. Tempted to duck out on social media? Brand awareness will take a hit. Withdrawing from social media, even temporarily, can get an “out of sight, out of mind” response from consumers and erode brand awareness – both during and after the crisis.

Generally speaking, every effort should be made to understand consumer needs and address those needs with relevant cross-channel messaging. That’s how brands earn trust and loyalty. When it comes to perception, a solid advertising budget can serve to demonstrate an advertiser’s faith in the brand and signal its dominance – in terms of reliability and performance – over conspicuously absent competitors.

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## Set the tone

The underlying message? We’re in this together – we can get through this. Consistent messaging that helps consumers navigate their current situation (physical, emotional or otherwise) will help the brand build stronger relationships in the long run, above and beyond the crisis.

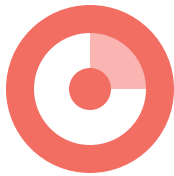
## Why should I stay the course?



### Educate your target

Now is the time to educate consumers on the benefits of your products and services (WIIFM). Content your team has lagged on in busier times may finally see the light of day. A short break from pressure to sell may drive brand development and creative focus; use this time to reinforce your positioning and stand out from the crowd. Get creative, keep it real – empower and entertain your audience!

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### Protect your market turf

Quiet brands watch as competitors seize market share and awareness, benefiting from the “buyer’s market” ad pricing that goes along with any large-scale crisis. And they might have to play catch-up for years once the economy recovers.

The Strategic Planning Institute argues that while reducing ad spend through recessions may improve a company’s return on capital, it will slow growth in later years.<sup>1</sup> For example, companies who held or grew ad spend through the 2008 recession saw their sales and market share climb both during and after the crisis.<sup>2</sup>

1. Ayşen Akyüz and Mustafa Ercilasun, “The Role of Advertising during Recession,” International Conference on Eurasian Economies 2014 (Conference paper, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.36880/c05.01141>)

2. Brad Adgate, “When A Recession Comes, Don’t Stop Advertising,” Forbes (Forbes Magazine, September 5, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bradadgate/2019/09/05/when-a-recession-comes-dont-stop-advertising>)

# Making it work



## Reconnect with your brand DNA

Brands, like people, deal with world events in their own way. It's the agency's job (community managers, strategists, copywriters) to ensure consistency in terms of brand behaviour and traits.

We usually define a brand's personality – its voice and tone, its mission and values – at the outset of a mandate. Well, now it's time to look back at this documentation and act accordingly.

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## Consider your target

Step into your target's shoes. Consider their needs and how your brand can be of value to them (or what you should avoid). For example, a business selling low-cost goods to minimum-wage consumers should steer clear of advice about working from home.

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## Stay in the loop

Things change fast; yesterday's home run could be today's strikeout. Take the context into account when replying to or posting a message. Community management will take centre stage and brand account managers will be expected to tread lightly and very, very carefully. Keep your ear to the ground to hit the right notes (today).

### Ask the right questions

- What role does our brand play in people's lives?
- What specific challenges do our customers currently face?
- How do they feel about the future?
- How do we want our brand to be perceived during this crisis? And after the crisis?

# Brands and COVID-19

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**“You earn reputation  
by trying to do  
hard things well.”**

— Jeff Bezos

We are facing a situation of unprecedented scope and scale, an evolving global crisis likely to impact every brand, company and individual for the foreseeable future. This new reality calls for thoughtful and deliberate planning.

# Consumer psychology

The personas you so carefully crafted will take on new worries, fears and routines, so don't pull back on market research and analysis. Understand shifts in spending patterns and fine-tune your strategies to reflect any new trends. As consumers reassess personal priorities and reallocate resources, your approach and tactics **will** matter.

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## Factors impacting consumption:<sup>3</sup>

- Disposable income
  - Trust in the future
  - Confidence in business and the economy
  - Lifestyle and values
- 

## Four purchasing categories arise in times of crisis:<sup>4</sup>

- **Essential:** Critical to survival or well-being
- **Treat:** Justifiable immediate gratifications
- **Postponables:** Wants or needs that can be postponed
- **Expendables:** Unnecessary or unjustifiable expenses

3. Adgate

4. John Quelch and Katherine E. Jocz, "How to Market in a Downturn," Harvard Business Review (HBR, August 1, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2009/04/how-to-market-in-a-downturn-2>)



## Consumer Segments' Changing Behaviour

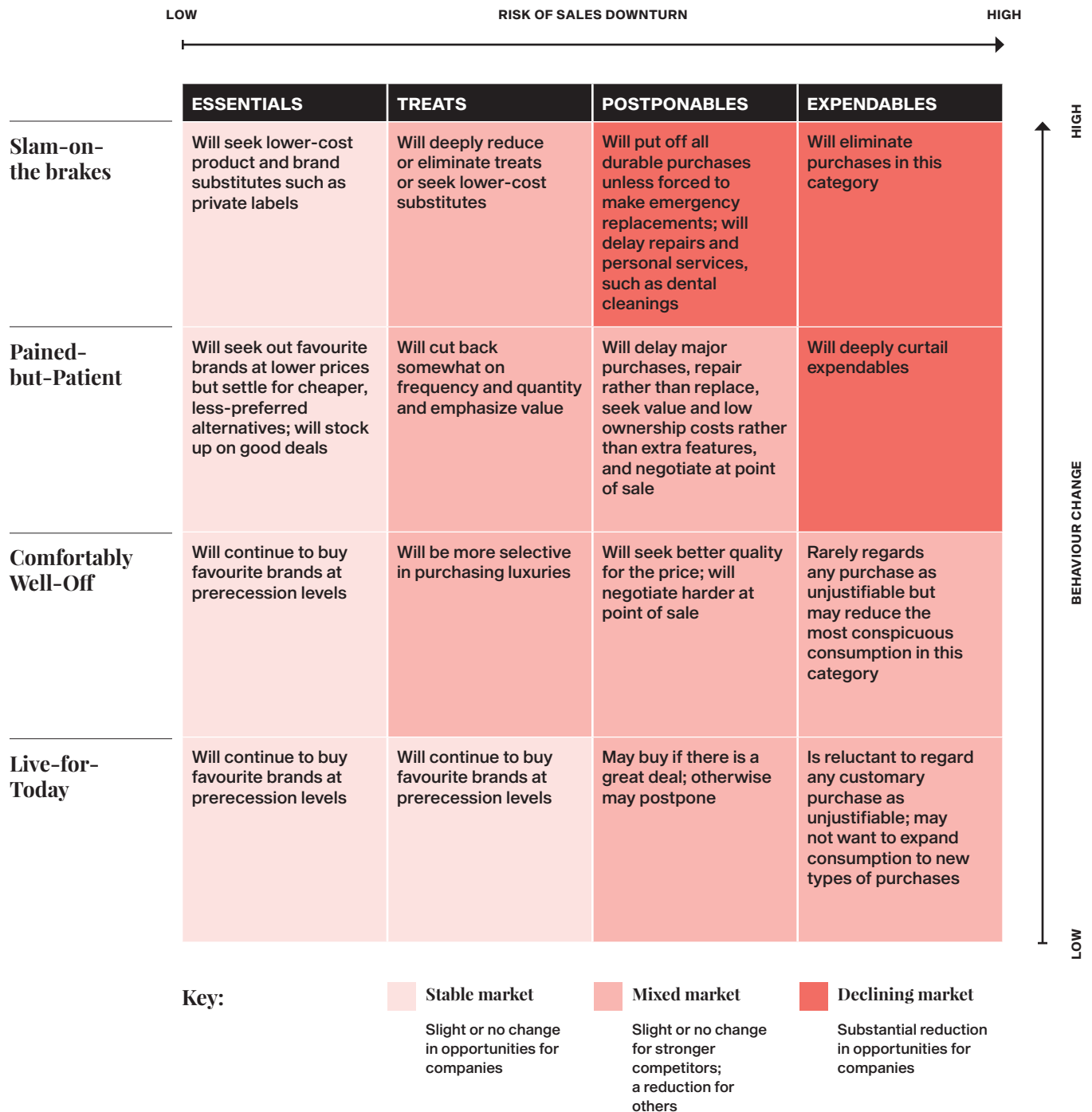


Fig. 1. Consumer Segments' Changing Behavior : Quelch, John, and Katherine E. Jocz. "How to Market in a Downturn." Harvard Business Review (HBR, August 1, 2014. <https://hbr.org/2009/04/how-to-market-in-a-downturn-2>)

# Conduct and content

When times are tough, consumers seek out comfort, relief and information. As a brand, displays of empathy and soothing language that reinforce emotional connections are key.

Brand visibility, relevance and differentiation in the years after recovery will be narrowly linked to impressions made today. In the meantime, content that restores a relative sense of normalcy can help consumers overcome fear and cope with the psychological impact of uncertainty and self-isolation.

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## Consumer behaviour changes

- E-commerce uptick
- Live streaming and video conferencing
- Cutting expenses

### Do

- Provide accurate, reliable information
- Lighten the mood (within reason)
- Create virtual experiences
- Convey support, compassion and solidarity

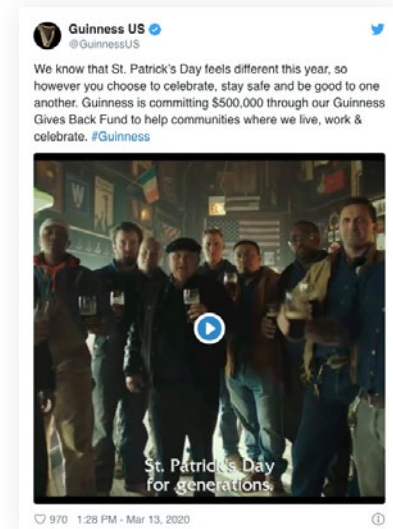
### Don't

- Talk about travel and tourism
- Promote out-of-home activities
- Mention scarce commodities
- Share big announcements and campaigns
- Show close physical contact
- Pat yourself on the back (all talk, no action)

# Blueprints for success

## Guinness 13 March 2020

An infusion of cash and comfort from a trusted brand.



## Vans 17 March 2020

An energetic, free-spirited brand combines colour and solidarity.



## Blueprints for success

### no name 17 March 2020

Targeted, relevant, on-brand –  
and funny!



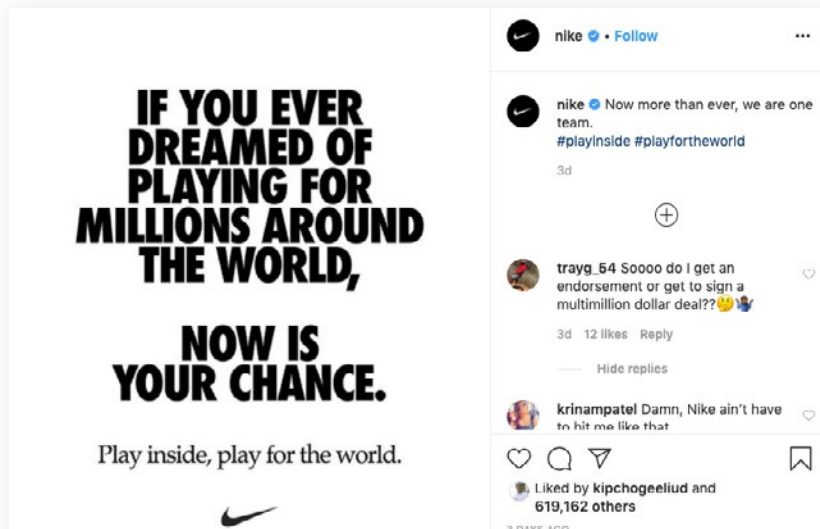
### SAQ 18 March 2020

Life goes on and spring unfolds.



### Nike 21 March 2020

A brand that stands out –  
yet again – for its spirit of solidarity,  
ability to inspire and knack  
for bringing people together.

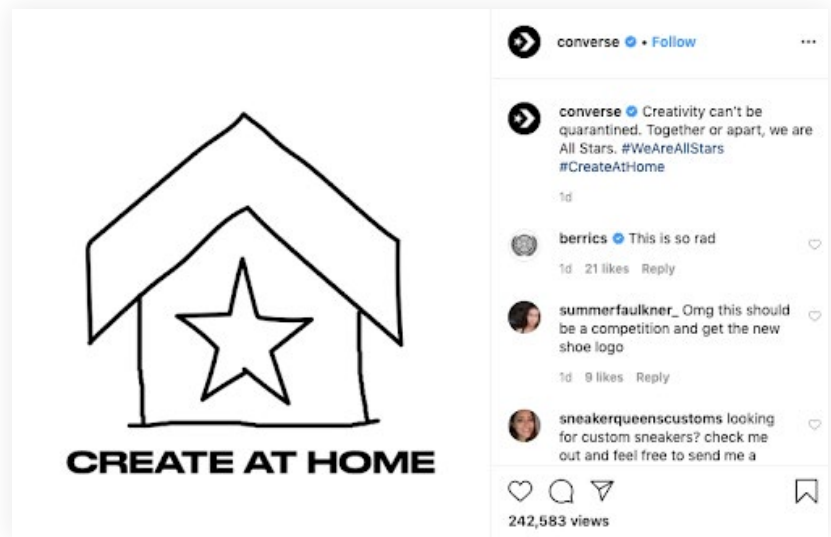


## Blueprints for success

### Converse

23 March 2020

An ingenious twist on the brand's visual identity.



### Everlane

17 March 2020

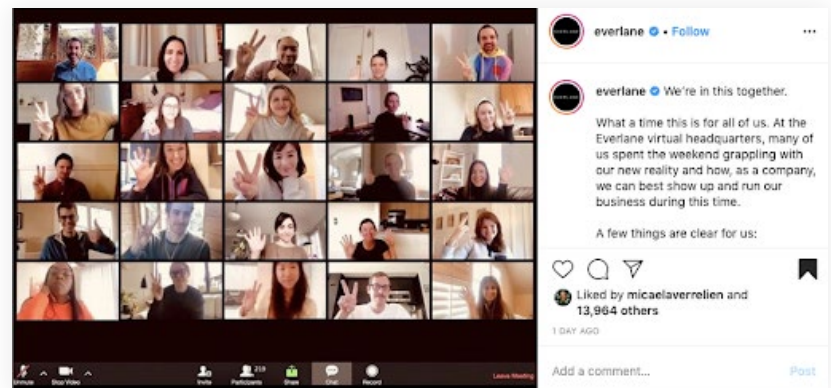
One brand that knows its target.



### Everlane

16 March 2020

Tough times, new challenges – no harm in talking about it. Transparency and compassion build trust.





## Blueprints for success

### Swatch

16 March 2020

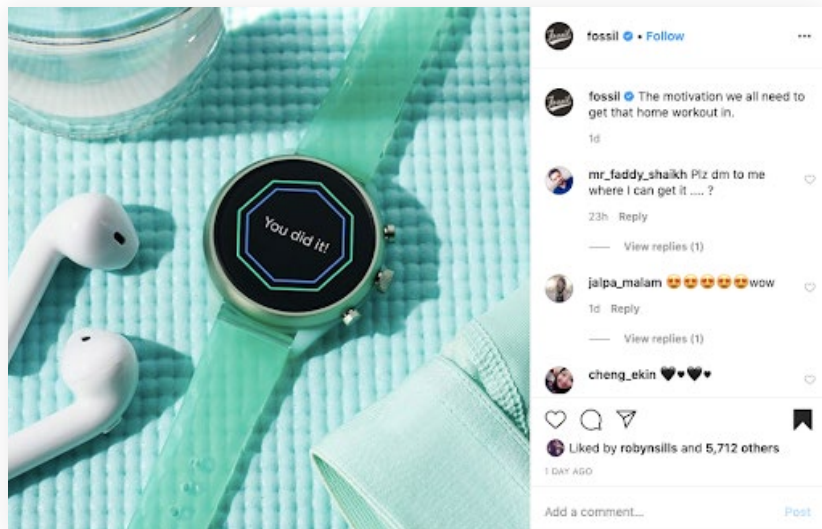
A subtle reference to health; a touch of colour in gloomy times. Careful but clever.



### Fossil

17 March 2020

Educating consumers on product features.



### Essie

17 March 2020

Window as a backdrop.

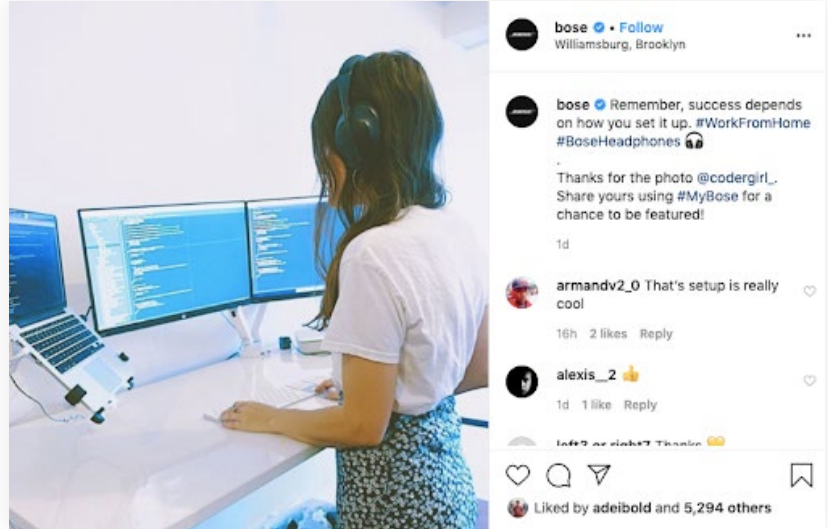


## Blueprints for success

### Bose

17 March 2020

Associating product and reality.



### Sennheiser

17 March 2020

Fun at home together – without touching.



# Resilient brands

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“Stopping advertising to save money is like stopping your watch to save time.”

— Henry Ford

## The Great Depression

Post slashed ad spend while Kellogg's doubled theirs – and made a 30% increase in profits.

Chrysler was the third largest player in the U.S. auto industry, behind General Motors and Ford. Right as the Depression was ramping up, Chrysler introduced its new entry-level car, the Plymouth, and ultimately overtook Ford as the second-largest car manufacturer in North America.<sup>5</sup>

Kraft launched Miracle Whip in 1933. Six months later it was America's best-selling condiment.<sup>6</sup>

5. James Surowiecki, "Hanging Tough," *The New Yorker* (The New Yorker, June 18, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/04/20/hanging-tough>)

6. *Ibid.*



## 1980-1985

A study of the 1980-1985 recession conducted by McGraw-Hill Research found that, of the 600 companies examined, those who kept on advertising reported a 256% surge over competitors who either cut back or stopped spending.<sup>7</sup>

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## 1990-1991

According to a McKinsey study of the 1990-1991 recession, companies that stayed at the top of the market or made serious gains during the downturn had increased their acquisition, R&D and advertising budgets, while bottom-end companies had cut back. A Bain & Company report found that twice as many companies moved from rock bottom to the top of their industry than in previous and subsequent years.<sup>8</sup>

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## The 2000s

Apple launched the iPod in 2001.<sup>9</sup>

Apple's 2009 earnings were \$1.23 billion, up 15% from 2008 – a record high.<sup>10</sup>

Amazon's new Kindle products boosted market share in the middle of a downturn. On Christmas Day 2009, eBook purchases outpaced printed books for the first time, as the company's sales grew by 28%.<sup>11</sup>

In 2009, as consumers fretted over spending in the wake of the financial crisis, Coca-Cola put its characteristic positivity and enthusiasm to work with "Open happiness", much as it had in 1971 with the "Hilltop" campaign.

7. Apryl Duncan, "Advertise in a Recession to Grow Your Business," The Balance Careers (The Balance Careers, June 25, 2019), <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/advertising-in-a-bad-economy-39250>

8. Surowiecki

9. Ibid.

10. Bobbie Johnson, "Apple Bucks Recession with Some of Best Financial Results in Its History, Thanks to New iPhone 3GS," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, July 21, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2009/jul/21/apple-financial-results>)

11. Adgate

## Now

Digital platform usage is skyrocketing, and consumers are more connected than ever before. They want quality content — and they want it now. A lot of it.

What are you waiting for?



# References and additional reading

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# About Camden

Camden is an independent, international full-service ad agency in Montreal's Mile End creative hub. We bring value to our clients by applying a philosophy we call pivotal thinking: a steady, steadfast commitment to awareness, understanding and expertise. Founded in 1991, the agency currently employs around 60 people at its Montreal headquarters and offices in Toronto and Lyon, France. Camden works in English and French from the ground up to serve a broad North-American and European clientele, including brands such as Intact Insurance, Clarins, Port of Montreal, Sobeys, Mylan, The National Gallery of Canada, Fiera Capital, Alithya, Retired Teachers of Ontario, Lassonde, Ville de Montréal, Toyo Tires, Vinci, Manulife Private Wealth, Essilor and TC Transcontinental. The agency's motto: Do you have the courage? We have the audacity.

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