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HEY BRANDS – 9 IN 10 AMERICANS ARE COUNTING ON YOU TO HELP US THROUGH THIS. NO PRESSURE.

People-Friendly brands win. And this is more true than ever as we all navigate the uncertainty that the COVID-19 crisis has generated in our world. In fact, 93% of Americans agree: In a time like this, it's more important than ever that brands put people first. So what does it mean to put people first right now? We asked over 350 Americans to share their experiences and attitudes with us during this unprecedented time, and some key themes emerged.

First, being People-Friendly means acting with integrity – being reliable, consistent and transparent in your words and actions. People don't expect perfection from brands, but they demand honesty. 92% agree that in these uncertain times, it's important for companies to be honest and transparent,

even if it means admitting to mistakes. And acting with integrity right now will cement relationships going forward, as 9 in 10 say they're more likely to support those brands that take care of their employees during this crisis.

Second, being People-Friendly means being useful – meeting important needs and making life easier. What people need most of all is to find their way to a new normal. The top two challenges our respondents said they're facing right now are “finding ways to make my life feel ‘normal’” and “sticking to a new routine/schedule.” Not surprisingly, they're also struggling with their wellness, with challenges around sleeping, stress eating and getting exercise each reported by roughly 1 in 3 Americans. Brands have a huge opportunity to help Americans reshape their new lives for the better.

Third, being People-Friendly means delivering simplicity – offering help when and where it's needed, and always providing simple, intuitive experiences. As all of our lives have been upended, we're having to learn how to do completely new activities, or become fluent in technologies that have not previously felt approachable. More than half of Americans report using online technology to complete financial transactions for the first time or more often than before, and roughly half are ordering groceries or household supplies online for the first time or more often. Over 1 in 3 are relying on telehealth to a greater degree – a number we expect will only increase in the coming weeks. These new technologies can be intimidating and frustrating, not to mention fraught with potential embarrassment for new users. Brands can help demystify these new technologies, or even just let people know that they're not alone as they struggle along the learning curve.

Finally, being People-Friendly means building a deeper bond with your consumers – understanding where you fit in their lives and helping them feel connected to those who share their values. A silver lining of this crisis is the growing sense of interconnectedness we all feel. In fact, social distancing has made Americans get creative in building their connections – with 2 in 3 video chatting with friends and family more than before and 41% having more virtual get-togethers, like Zoom happy hours with friends. But this crisis has also revealed new connections. 7 in 10 Americans say they feel more connected to their local communities than before, and 83% say they have an expanded sense of empathy toward people and communities far beyond their typical everyday lives. Brands can lean into the sense of togetherness this moment has generated, highlighting the ways in which everyday people (and yes, the brands that support them) are helping each other out.

There's a huge opportunity for the brands that choose to be more People-Friendly at a time when other businesses are simply slashing budgets. Now more than ever, doing what's right for your people is also right for your long-term growth. Because consumers are paying attention – 9 in 10 agree that brands can help us all get through this crisis, and 9 in 10 have already noticed those brands who are doing something useful, whether it's delivering critical medical supplies for hospitals, making their services or experiences free for consumers, providing financial relief or just sharing a funny meme that gives

us all a much needed mental break. And consumers are doing more than noticing, they're buying. 40% of our respondents said they'd tried out a new product or brand during this crisis. And of them, 85% said they expect to continue using that new product or brand after the crisis ends.

Now is the time to ask yourself: How can my brand do right by people?

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Methodology

On March 24th, The Variable fielded a survey with 368 respondents across the general population, using a panel supplied by Lucid. Additionally, we partnered with The Paragraph Project to field three questions to their panel of 400 respondents between March 20 and March 24 in a pre-wave analysis.

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[\(https://thevariable.com/\)](https://thevariable.com/)

We collaborate with ambitious brands and people; we'd love to build something together.

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