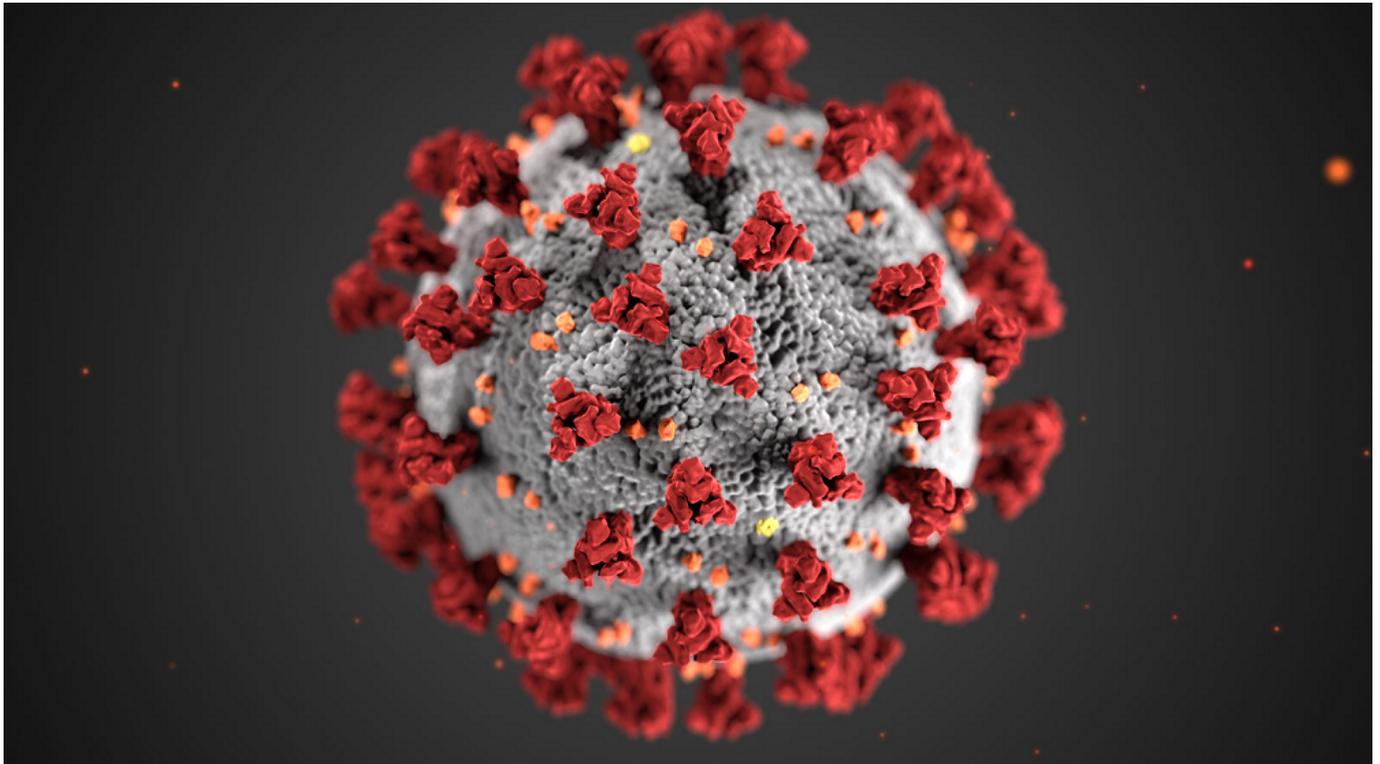


**COVID-19 and PR: The Industry
Has Suffered Along with
Everyone Else but There Have
Been Some New Opportunities**



And PR Can Help with COVID Messaging as Well as with the Next Pandemic

Andrew Blum

Along with the rest of the world, the communications business has suffered during COVID-19 but the pandemic has also brought with it some new PR opportunities and led the way to more creativity and experimentation.

I know that my clients and I, and other PR agencies and their in-house counterparts and all their clients have been impacted – with staff getting COVID, working from home, losing business, having projects delayed, and other setbacks. Two of my clients even came down with COVID – thankfully they are okay. I also learned that a TV producer I used to work with died of COVID. It's been a rough, challenging two years.

And yes, all of this PR stuff pales in comparison to more than 800,000 COVID deaths in the United States, and a total of 5.5 million worldwide deaths as well as all the sick people.

Yet along with all this bad news, there have some PR bright

spots and some new roles.

In some ways, COVID has given PR some new opportunities – whether it be new clients or new angles to pitch their clients on to the media. It has also made PR people work more creatively in WFH settings and to deal with news media also working from home, and COVID has brought everyone into the Zoom age. Zoom has also made it easier in some ways for clients to be interviewed by reporters and broadcast hosts

PR people have also had to play COVID enforcer at the small number of live events or in-person meetings that have been held – making sure everyone knows ahead of time of what the COVID protocols are and that they need to wear a mask. I had one live event that I was directing PR for which was postponed due to COVID and then finally it was held, but with a smaller media outreach and attendance that I had planned. It had to be that way.

Along with Zoom and COVID coverage has come a new cadre of COVID talking heads. It was similar to what happened during the Mueller investigation, when a group of unheard or forgotten white collar lawyers became cable TV regulars. And now during COVID, we have come to know and rely upon comments from Dr. Anthony Fauci, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky, a number of private sector physicians and nurses and contagious disease experts, and even former New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, who before his #MeToo implosion and 2021 resignation, gave daily COVID news briefings that became must see TV.

I would argue that now with the Omicron variant raging, and a continuing battle over vaccines, boosters, testing and mandates all over the country, there is a need for good COVID PR. This is due in part to the sometimes mixed and confusing messages on COVID coming out of Washington, and to the opposition to COVID policies.

Unfortunately, I don't think we are out of the woods yet on COVID. It wouldn't surprise me if there is another variant after Omicron.

Personally, I can't wait for this to end and for us to be able to stop wearing masks and go about some kind of better new normal. I also wouldn't mind having less Zoom calls but they may be here to stay.

And as much as I hope we don't have to deal with a pandemic again, it appears likely that we will have another one in the future. PR can and should play a role in future pandemics.



About the Author: Andrew Blum is a PR consultant and media trainer and principal of AJB Communications. He has directed PR for professional services and financial services firms, NGOs, agencies and other clients. As a PR executive, and formerly as a journalist, he has been involved on both sides of the media aisle in some of the most media intensive crises of the past 25 years. Contact him at ajbcomms@gmail.com or follow him on Twitter: [@ajbcomms](https://twitter.com/ajbcomms)