Transcript

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Race relations and racism are probably on your mind. You may be wondering if you and your organization should get involved – and if so, how.

Should you run ads or make statements expressing your position on racial inequity? Make donations or changes in your hiring practices and promote these actions? Change the brand names or messages that you use?

Before you do anything, I recommend you:

1. Listen to your stakeholders
2. Inspect your core values
3. Examine your touchpoints

Learn more about these steps in this new video.

To learn more from Denise Lee Yohn or to book her to speak to your organization, see her website and YouTube channel.

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You may be wondering what, if any, changes you should make to your messages and images to address racial injustice and the recent demonstrations against inequity and police violence.

You've probably seen companies post messages and run ads speaking out against racial inequity. Companies have also been promoting donations they've made to the Black Lives Matter Foundation, bail funds and black-led advocacy organizations -- or their decisions like implementing racial quotas or new policies.

We're also hearing that major food and drink companies are rebranding some of the products that have used names, images and phrases with racist connotations – like PepsiCo, which is doing away with its Aunt Jemima syrup brand, and Mars, which is changing the name and packaging of its Uncle Ben's rice. You might even be aware that Unilever has decided to change its Fair & Lovely brand name and join other beauty brands in removing words such as "white" and "light" to avoid promoting a certain skin tone over others.

So what should you do? Should your brand take a stand on racial issues? How can you participate in the conversation or get involved in ways that are respectful and meaningful but not inappropriate or insensitive?

It's tricky. We're all trying to figure this out, and I don't have definitive answers, but here are a few suggestions:

No. 1: Listen. Listen to your stakeholders, including employees, customers, community leaders and influencers. Proactively reach out to people to understand how they're feeling and what they need, and be open to their perspectives on what you should be doing. They may share difficult feedback, but you're better off hearing it from them directly and having the opportunity to address their concerns.

Second, inspect your values. Now is the time to carefully look at the core values of your organization. Determine whether or not they adequately convey what's critical to the vitality and viability of your organization -- and if they actually shape the way you and your people think and act.

For example, you can't just include the words "diversity and inclusion" on the list of your values and expect your organization to embrace people's differences. If you want to achieve authentic diversity and inclusion, you need to define behaviors and standards that clearly demonstrate what it looks like, and you need to implement policies and accountabilities that ensure it happens.

Once your organization is truly driven by your values, not only will you be operating with integrity, you will also be able to stand up to the scrutiny that will inevitably come with any message you issue or action you take. Some of the harshest criticism has been on brands

that seem be signaling virtues in their PR but not taking real action or having a substantive impact.

And that brings us to action **No. 3: Examine your touchpoints.** Start looking at all the ways you communicate and engage with your stakeholders. Conducting a brand audit like I described in <u>my last video</u> is a good way to do this. Ask yourself if you or your organization is doing or saying anything that isn't aligned with your stakeholders' expectations and your core values.

If necessary, make changes; even if they seem costly, the cost of not taking action may be greater. Also look for new ways to express your values, stand up for what you believe in and make an impact with your words and actions. When in doubt, if something is appropriate and effective, go back to your stakeholders to get their input.

So, listen to your stakeholders, inspect your core values, examine your touchpoints. These are starting points for deciding if and how to take a stand on race today, but for brand-building at all times.