

In print we trust:

Coles ups ante on comms during Covid

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Coles chief marketing officer Lisa Ronson, above, and a scene from Coles' sustainability campaign

At a time when misinformation and mistrust over Covid-19 are eating into public confidence, Coles has recognised the importance of established publishers as a key conduit for its advertising spend.

"We have been varying our media mix for our Covid messaging quite dramatically," Coles' chief marketing officer (CMO) Lisa Ronson said.

"With some of these messages, because they're so sensitive and because our customers, and all Australians, are very anxious about it, we have to use trusted media. That's why we've been putting a lot of our Covid messages into press as it's one of the most trusted advertising mediums in Australia."

The company upweighted its research efforts during the pandemic, tracking how people are feeling and how exactly they are moving around. Along with day to day customer measurement it has sought feedback from customers through its various research panels, tapped into its online community, Coles Circle, much more frequently and hosted virtual focus groups.

"Customer movements and customer sentiment has changed so dramatically from when the pandemic began to now," Ms Ronson said.

"We need to be on the pulse of how our customers are thinking and feeling. It's critical."



With Coles an essential service and a “critical part of serving the community”, it has had to navigate communications around safety for customers and employees, as well as issues of supply. As a result of the research, Coles, which works with media agency OMD and creative agencies DDB Australia and Big Red, shook up its ad strategy related to its Covid communications.

TV advertisements are very much focused on what it’s doing in-store with team members and sanitisation, while press allowed for more detailed information, state by state.

Having trusted vehicles for messaging is critical for Coles, which just three years ago was among the top five most distrusted brands in Australia.

It posed a real threat to Coles and was a key focus of Coles chief executive Steven Cain, when he hired Ms Ronson into the job two-and-a-half years ago.

“Our vision is to be the most trusted retailer in Australia and to do that you need to have strong communication skills with customers and also with members,” Ms Ronson said.

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This is an extract, full version of the story can be sought from *The Australian*.