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WHEN THE WORLD STOPPED

Case Study

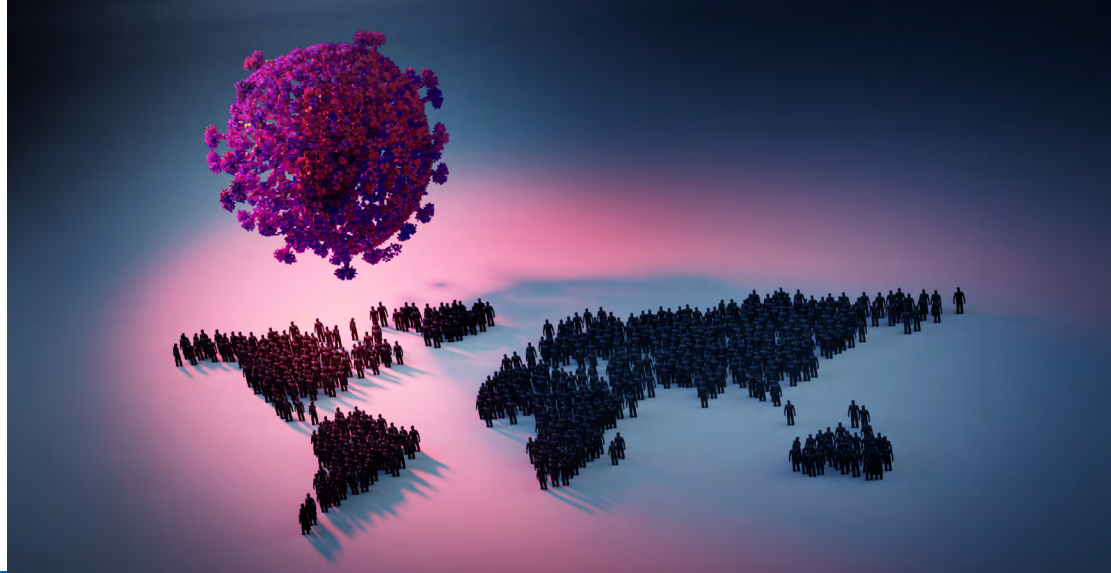
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THE COST OF CLARITY

This work carried more than late nights and relentless vigilance. It carried the weight of precision for those unsettled by truth from those unsettled by truth, the sting of being shunned for refusing panic or denial, as the noise of misinformation grew louder. To walk forward anyway — to sift signal from chaos, to offer calm where others spread fear — a responsibility we accepted.

“Thank you for your commitment to educate.” — Local Hospital PR Director

CASE STUDY: When the World Stopped



INFORMATION CHAOS IN EARLY 2020

Calm in a Time of Crisis

Workingarts Stepped into the Breach



When the COVID-19 pandemic began to unfold, information was everywhere—yet clarity was nowhere. Conflicting reports, fragmented updates, and rumor-fueled social media made it nearly impossible for people to track what mattered most for their daily lives.

In the early days after lockdowns took effect in April 2020, information was only trickling in. One of the first reliable sources came not from U.S. agencies, but from a Netherlands-based site that quickly began publishing data linked to primary sources. Using Google Translate, we scanned articles across Asia—particularly from China, Japan, and South Korea—to extract data and interpret emerging opinion pieces.

Meanwhile, there was almost no usable local information. Public health departments were still finding their footing, while the CDC released conflicting guidance—most notably on the availability of testing kits. On March 6, 2020, then-President Trump declared during a CDC visit that “anybody that wants a test can get a test,” insisting that the tests were “perfect.” Public health officials quickly disputed this, pointing instead to shortages and testing barriers. As the national conversation became politicized, we chose to focus only on verifiable data.

To do this, we began bookmarking and cross-referencing multiple global sources: newspapers, TV stations, health departments, the CDC, the WHO (which held near-daily video briefings), and state and national outlets. Our rule was simple: only report what could be confirmed by multiple independent sources.

The Turning Point

In March 2020, Workingarts began monitoring COVID-19 developments closely—at first for a small circle of friends and family. But the seeds of this effort had been planted months earlier.

We had been tracking the virus as far back as December 2019, when reports of a mysterious illness in Wuhan, China, first surfaced—before the disease even had a name. By January 11, 2020, the genome of the virus (then called SARS-CoV-2) had been sequenced and shared globally, enabling laboratories around the world to begin working on test kits and vaccines. Just twelve days later, plans for a new 1,000-bed hospital in Wuhan were livestreamed, showing construction in real time. The project was completed on February 2, 2020—only ten days after breaking ground.

That astonishing feat of speed and organization crystallized our awareness that the world

was entering uncharted territory. From that moment, we began actively seeking out reliable information and sharing it with our network—laying the foundation for what would soon become a structured, daily digest.

By June, what began as private notes evolved into a formal digest. As our process became more fluid and global data sources grew more reliable, we set out to publish information that would be useful to anyone, anywhere, while also keeping our local families and friends informed.

We focused on tracking the most critical measures of the crisis: case counts, deaths, death rates, testing availability, and positivity rates. To make trends more accessible, we built graphs and visualizations that allowed readers to see the progression at global, national, state, and local levels—all within a single, daily reference point.

THE APPROACH: A Calm, Central Source

Each day, we visited a core set of roughly two dozen websites that published reliable updates—ranging from international health agencies to state dashboards and global news outlets. From this mix, we gathered data, cross-checked numbers, and identified trends worth highlighting.

At first, we sent our findings by simple email. But as the subscriber list grew, we adopted Constant Contact to manage distribution more effectively. To make the digest a true reference point, we paired the email with a dedicated section on our website, where we hosted the graphs we created daily, along with relevant PDFs, links to articles, and images that helped illustrate emerging stories.

The backbone of the digest was our own interpretation and visualization of the data. Our local county's public health department epidemiologist became an early subscriber, offering a validating "thumbs up" on both our process and our results.

THE RESULTS

A Trusted Guide in a Crisis

What began as a small effort for friends and family quickly expanded into a widely followed daily digest. By mid-2020, subscribers included community members, professionals, and even public health officials who valued the digest's clarity and consistency.

Readers described it as a reliable way to cut through the noise of constant headlines and shifting narratives. For many, it became their single go-to source each morning.



One particularly meaningful endorsement came from Minh Nguyen, Epidemiologist at the Madera County Public Health Department:

“Thanks for the information. It’s greatly appreciated to get just in-depth information about worldwide COVID-19 activities on the daily.”

Others expressed their gratitude more simply but no less powerfully:

“Evermore tragic by the day! Thank you for these updates. They are so important because they put it all into perspective from where I sit.” — Subscriber

“Thank you for sharing with me. I appreciate the nightly updates. Thanks for all you and Renee are doing. They are honorable actions.” — School Board Member

“Btw, I appreciate your analysis and these emails. Much better read than the panic attack I get from watching and listening to ABC News.” — Educator

“Thank you so much for all your hard work on this! I read it every night. I am going to share your site with all the school board members tomorrow! Thanks for all the hard work!” — School Administrator

“I really appreciate the lecture you included. That is exactly what I want to know.” — Educator

“Petals of truth in a hurricane of lies.” — Subscriber

The digest provided not only facts and graphs, but also a sense of steadiness during a time when reliable guidance was hard to find. This financial strategy allowed the district to maintain a professional-grade communications product without increasing its communications budget—a major win for long-term sustainability.

THE IMPACT

Lessons in Clarity and Trust

The COVID digest reinforced one of Workingarts' central convictions: **in moments of crisis, clear and steady communication is as important as the information itself.** By filtering noise, visualizing trends, and focusing only on verifiable data, we helped people make sense of a confusing, frightening global event.

The project also demonstrated Workingarts' core strengths—translating complex information into accessible formats, balancing local and global perspectives, and communicating with calm authority. These skills, honed during a once-in-a-century crisis, continue to guide our work with clients who face urgent, high-stakes communication challenges.

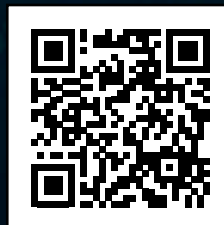


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