

A day in the lockdown life of MetropolitanRepublic chief creative officer Paul Warner

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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"8am. Wake up. Drink coffee. Walk, drinking another coffee, on the way to a coffee shop.

"9:30am. Run back to my house trying to avoid the police for being outside of exercise curfew. Hit back-to-back Zoom meetings till 8pm.

"9:01pm. Open bottle of wine. Make dinner while watching Trump's latest comedy show on CNN. Get into bed, fall asleep to TikTok or Netflix (you must watch *One of us* and *Unorthodox*).

"Repeat." – CCO of MetropolitanRepublic, Paul Warner's account of work-life in the time of Covid-19.

■ ***What was your initial response to the crisis/lockdown and has your experience of it been different to what you expected?***

It saddens me to see people blaming each other for not being ready for this day, not having enough ventilators, plans or even infrastructure in place, hating on many of the decisions, rules and solutions that global governments and even our own government leaders have taken. No one could ever have planned for something on this scale. Everyone is trying their best. I am so proud of our government's fast and tough responses that were taken. Yes, some could have been faster and others haven't been thought through, but everyone is working as hard as they can. It's so easy to sit of the sidelines and complain.

■ ***Comment on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the agency and creative industry or economy as a whole.***

MetropolitanRepublic has always been a bit of a nomadic company. We've been working in over 12 countries in Africa for over 10 years now, deploying fast responder teams to multiple countries simultaneously. So, we've lived with remote working, 'pop-up hotel' agencies and remote online, all-day workgroups with clients for quite a while. The impact has not really been too disruptive for our teams.

“ Creatively, it's an interesting thing. Lockdown does the opposite for the creative mind, I believe. It 'opens up' to new possibilities, new collaborations and irrevocable change, overnight. ”

However, with that said, I think it's a time of natural selection for companies, brands and whole categories to adapt or die. Best be ready.



MetropolitanRepublic chief creative officer Paul Warner.

■ How is the agency responding to the crisis and current lockdown?

We've been forging new paths for a while now and have always been a purpose-led thinking company first; not just to navigate a new world, but to help create purpose-led solutions to help our clients create a better world. Working shoulder-to-shoulder with our clients, we don't shy away from the inevitable challenges that arise, we lean into them. We flex our brains and teams to stretch our ingenuity to design novel solutions for the novel coronavirus with adaptive, responsive real-time products and communication for this time of unprecedented change.

■ Comment on the challenges and opportunities.

Speaking of opportunities, the world has really turned to creativity during this time.

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■ **Why do you think this is the case and what does this mean for the industry, agencies and their clients/brands?**

“ Covid is a test of resilience as much as a test of immunity. As the world resets, we'll see winners and losers. We can't standstill. We can't rely on old tricks. Our time has come, as the crazy ones, to create new rules of engagement and new brand behaviours. For brands to win, they will have to become more resourceful, more agile, more empathetic, less self-serving, more community-minded, more enduring and more endearing, and definitely more purpose-led. ”

Likewise, the same applies to agencies and their thinking.

■ **How are you navigating 'physical distancing' while keeping your team close-knit and aligned and your clients happy?**

We've never been closer. The pandemic has stripped away any remaining formality. It's the great leveller that has brought out the best (and the worst) in us, as we bond through technology and vulnerability, to realise that physical distance has cultivated more connection, more humility and more laughs – as much as with colleagues as with clients. I think we are all becoming more solution-orientated and are all working harder and quicker to produce and roll out solutions.

■ **Has this global crisis changed your view of the future of advertising/marketing in any way? Any trends you've seen emerge as a result of the crisis?**

We can now classify brands as denialists, opportunists, realists, philanthropists or activists, and what we need most right now, are activists. Lucky we've always attracted purpose-led brands and this crisis is a seminal time for activist brands to thrive.

■ **Your key message to fellow industry folk?**

Make sure your brands give more right now than they take. Don't be tone-deaf. Millions are struggling. Help, wherever you can.

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