

Six Challengers who made things happen in 2020 - against the odds!

By [Rhiannon Rees](#), issued by [eatbigfish](#)

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This year has been one for the books.

The global Covid-19 crisis has upheaved how we live, work, educate our children, shop and connect with friends and family. It has created an environment of extraordinary uncertainty and anxiety for individuals and institutions, with significant environmental, economic, social and psychological effects – many of which will reverberate through the world for the next couple of years at least.

It's easy, in this sort of environment, to give in to a victim mindset. It's easy to lower your ambitions, to find reasons for why things can't or won't work, to say: "Well, we can't do any better in the circumstances!" And nobody would blame you. It's been *tough*.

And yet, there have been those that have found opportunity in this confusing and constrained space, and have used the constraints to innovate or even do the seemingly *impossible*. The folks who believe that it's possible to beat the odds, get out there and make things happen in a world that's asked us to slow down and stay indoors. While we might call our friends who do this *show-offs*, we call the brands that do this Challengers.

Challengers are brands – and people behind the brands – whose ambitions exceed their circumstances, and who are prepared to act in whatever way is necessary to fulfil those ambitions. It's about a state of mind, rather than a state of market. And in a market as uncertain as the one we're currently living in, it's about having the resolve to *do something* rather than wait for things to emerge.



Rhiannon Rees

Turning lemons into lemonade

There are several brands who, in our view, have taken what could have been a massive blow to their businesses, and turned it into an opportunity to create new value for the people they serve, despite (or perhaps because of) the trying circumstances.

Yoco is a payments technology company geared at SMEs. Recognising that their clients were the most vulnerable to a national lockdown, Yoco launched several products and initiatives to support small businesses. This included guidelines for SMEs on how to apply for relief funding, a free 'Covid-19 Small Business Guide', making cash advances available through Yoco Capital, and helping businesses accelerate their transitions to online sales. Perhaps most notably, Yoco introduced its [Small Business Recovery Monitor](#), a daily update of how small businesses' turnovers have been affected by the Covid-19 lockdown. This, coupled with its [Support Small](#) business directory, drew national attention to the plight of South African small business owners.

Also helping those that lost income opportunities as a result of the lockdown was **Savanna Premium Cider**. In April 2020, Savanna launched the #SavannaVirtualComedyBar to keep consumers entertained while supporting local comics and entertainers. The initiative was launched across various social platforms with weekly bar nights and bi-weekly specials and, coupled with data prizes and promotions, helped South Africans stay entertained during the national call to #StayAtHome.

MPesa in Kenya also supported national efforts to promote social distancing and safer peer-to-peer transactions. The East African financial services platform, backed by network operator Safaricom, waived fees on money transfers under Ksh1000 (approximately \$10) and raised daily transaction limits to discourage physical currency exchange among Kenyans. MPesa also partnered with public transport provider, City Star Shuttles, to accept cashless payments through the platform, and promote safer social distancing practices.

Acknowledging that more people would be social distancing by staying at home, **Discovery** updated its policies. Discovery Health, in partnership with Vodacom, made free online doctor's consultations available through its DrConnect platform. Discovery Insure implemented a premium discount for drivers, recognising that they would be driving less and, therefore, at less risk on the roads. And across its Vitality programme, Discovery updated rewards to incentivise healthier at-home behaviours. Discovery also launched its Vitality At Home platform with instructional videos for home cooking, workouts and mental wellbeing and introduced a Virtual Run series to encourage runners to compete for further rewards. On top of this still, Discovery offered free learning support to clients' children through partnerships with Cambrilearn and MyTopDog.

Valenture Institute has taken online learning to another level. Launched in 2019, the global private online high school is not simply about remote learning (where students are sent learning materials and are expected to digest it by themselves), but is fundamentally a learning environment designed and created to exist online. Recognising parents' and students' concerns about accessing quality education during the Covid-19 crisis, Valenture Institute introduced an 'emergency' intake where students could join at any time and leave after three months – with a 20% discounted fee structure in place.

Also making quality online education available to students during lockdown is **Gradely**, a Nigerian e-learning platform. Gradely uses artificial intelligence tools to help parents and teachers identify their children and students' learning strengths and weaknesses through personalised homework and periodic testing, with the aim of driving improved results and retention. Even as students start returning to school, Gradely offers a personalised approach to a system that can often feel impersonal and is helping schools digitise their homework.

Crises drive innovation

Amidst the calamity and chaos of a global public health crisis and its ensuing economic upheaval, there are brands (and people) out there who have looked constraints in the eye and said: "We'll show you what we've got!"

From the examples above, it is clear that Challenger behaviour isn't confined to the new or the small. Regardless of category, competition, heritage or personality, these brands have shown that a Challenger mindset can help drive dramatic innovations and radically improve people's lives – regardless of the trials faced. They have had the resolve to create something of value, not just for themselves, but also for the people they aim to serve. For more info, visit www.deltavictorbravo.com

About Rhiannon Rees

Rees is a strategy director at DeltaVictorBravo. She has accumulated extensive experience on a number of brand, insights, marketing and people projects with clients across various industries, including Absa, BCX, BMW, Cell C, Liberty, Murray & Roberts, Old Mutual and The Foschini Group. She has also lectured on brand strategy and economics at the Vega School of Brand Leadership. Rees previously formed part of the Brand Council of South Africa's Management Committee and currently serves on the Vega Bordeaux Regional Advisory Council.

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