

# ELVIS

## **NOW IS THE RIGHT TIME TO ADDRESS YOUR AGENCY'S CLIMATE CRISIS INERTIA**

Why you should look at the B Corp certification framework as part of your post-Covid-19 plan

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Covid-19 may end up being the kick up the backside that we in Adland need to get our priorities straight. It has brought the realities of the Climate Crisis into sharp focus. We're now realising that it will affect us all and change our lives beyond recognition, when it previously felt hypothetical or unquantifiable. Many of us are questioning the meaningfulness of our role, business and lives as we live in lockdown. We have a heightened sense of awareness around our contribution (or lack of) to society and feel compelled to ensure that the more open ways of operating and collaborating we've been forced to experiment with over recent weeks become more permanently embedded within our agencies. More of us are waking up to the fact that embracing a different type of business model is critical in facing the challenges that lie ahead.

At ELVIS, we'd already started to look for a framework that would help us to explore what a new type of business model might look like, and we're now doubling down on implementing this. It was key for us to find an initiative that offered clear, actionable steps to deliver structured changes against, as knowing where to start felt overwhelming. As a result, we've decided to work to the B Corp model, and we want to encourage other agencies to consider a similar strategy if they too have been experiencing climate change inertia.

Certified B Corps (Benefit Corporations) are businesses that 'balance profit with people and planet'. They are for the benefit of all. This means they have to legally consider their environmental and social impact as much as their financial returns. The fact that brands such as Patagonia, The Body Shop and The Big Issue are all certified probably won't come as a surprise; all were conceived out of a strong sense of purpose. And it's probably brands like those that have subconsciously made you think that B Corp probably isn't for your agency. Perhaps Covid-19 will make you reconsider that.

I'm not, however, advocating for certification per se. Instead I'd like to offer up the B Corp framework as a tool that can help you have the conversations you need to be having within your company about post-Covid-19 business models, as its real strength is in getting us to think and act differently.

Every business in the UK is going to have to adjust rapidly again soon. The UK government has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, which scientists tell us actually needs to be 2030. Even with the decrease in carbon output brought about by this pandemic, with us all staying at home, flying and driving less, we are nowhere close to that. Achieving carbon neutrality is going to be very difficult. Few of us have any idea of how to ensure our agency is carbon neutral by 2050 let alone 2030.

Whilst all manner of experts are undoubtedly working on this, there is no blueprint to help us get there at the moment. But Covid-19 has already taught us that the ability to think holistically - about the planet as well as ourselves and our clients - will be critical to the transition, and that is something that we can actively start working on, right now. Agencies currently see things linearly (cause and effect thinking, briefing processes, growth KPI setting, effectiveness culture) so to change will take a conscious effort to reprogramme ourselves and our definition of leadership.

So, what if learning more about the B Corp framework was the first step on that journey to becoming carbon neutral? A way to start to imagine a whole new business model? Its free online impact assessment tool, made up of a series of multiple-choice questions, tells you how far off you are from certification and gives you a holistic appraisal of your company. The answers to those questions can help you to understand how the interdependencies between people, planet and profit might start to play out and how your thinking will need to evolve accordingly. As openness and honesty underpins B Corp, you can also see how other businesses score and the changes they have made. ELVIS is currently at 42, some 38 points off the minimum certification score of 80. The maximum score is 200. Whilst B Corp isn't perfect and certainly has its naysayers, engaging with the ethos behind it can surely only lead to a better outcome for all of us, irrespective of your actual score.

ELVIS is by no means the first agency to consider B Corp. And Rising and Havas London admirably led the charge there. Nor is it an agency that has its origins in purpose, social change or environmental causes. We believe we're actually indicative of a lot of other agencies starting out on this journey, who have been unsure of where to begin, who don't have huge sustainability budgets or inhouse specialists and, until recently, were worried about how resilient our business and clients would be to change. Covid-19 has shown that people and businesses can and do adapt for the greater good, giving a new momentum to Climate Crisis conversations. Let's make sure we don't waste this, and collectively start discussing, debating and reimagining what successful business models looks like for our industry in a post Covid-19 world.

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