

SHIFTING GEARS

A WINNER'S PLAYBOOK TO
PIVOT DURING A CRISIS



**21 ways to spur ideation and
create your path ahead**



PSAI
PROFESSIONAL SPEAKERS
ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

Shifting Gears

**A Winners Play Book to Pivot
During a Crisis**





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PREFACE

“Shifting Gears” is a unique book project. The entire book was conceptualized, planned, co-ordinated, written, designed and launched within 21 days of the start of the Covid-induced lockdown. 21 professionals from 21 different backgrounds have gotten together to co-author this book, with 21 unique ideas for pivoting a business during the Covid-19 downturn.

This book cuts through these hard times like a beacon of hope and positivity. It is not the strongest or the biggest who survive tough times, but the ones who adapt the fastest. In keeping with this spirit, members of the Professional Speakers Association of India (PSAI) have joined hands to crowdsource and co-author this book. PSAI is India’s largest community of professional speakers. It is the only authorised body from India that is recognized by and is a part of the prestigious Global Speakers Federation.

All the authors of this book are professional speakers, specializing in different domains. This project is an example of playing the game to one’s strength. The speakers have converted their gift of the gab into the format of a book.

The book contains 21 ideas for pivoting a business during a crisis. Each idea explains how one can turn adversities into opportunities. I am sure this book will trigger ideas in your mind on how you can make the most of this tough situation. Every downturn will see an upswing. This book will not only help you weather the storm but will also get you ready to jump on the upward curve when the economy bounces back.

We hope you enjoy this crowdsourced effort, and that it helps you pivot successfully during this pandemic- and any other crisis in future.

Kiruba Shankar

President

Professional Speakers Association of India

www.PSAI.in

April 2020

EXCLUSIVE AUTHOR INTERVIEWS

Let's face it. We are in a lockdown and life on the other side will not be the same. But winners pivot on their heels, shift gears to create newer springboard to success.

In shifting gears, 21 such stories of PSAI members who plan their rise and demystify the anatomy of resilience are shared. Their plans, their optimism and their contribution.

We have lessons from the Indian army, lessons from experienced speakers who have faced the 9/11 and the financial recession and now share their resilience during COVID, from deeper insights of self-leadership, mindfulness and positive psychology to everyday business strategies in marketing, podcasting, online courses, digital selling, personal branding to managing your investments and employee engagement the range of pivots are wide.

It is a collective effort in these uncertain and unstable times and sure there will be a few takeaways for everyone. You never know which story will spark your interest or help you in your journey.

What next to spur ideation and help you shift gears?

21 interviews – Hear their stories, watch their passion in 21 exclusive interviews with the 21 authors where they talk beyond the book to their own backstories, motivations and hands on tips to succeed in life and business.

Mail a copy of your book purchase receipt to **academy@psai.in** to hear rich ideas, strategies and pivots in 21 exclusive interviews.

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BEYOND THE HORIZON:

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The ARC model to lead yourself beyond the crisis

There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that's your own self. — Aldous Huxley

I have always thought that the most attractive people are those who are “comfortable being themselves.” It's something I have been working towards myself, and something I desire for my children, clients and students.

So yes, while the world locks itself down and stock markets dip, the economy slows and the dailies carry only stories of gloom, I decided to wear the hat of a coach to think of how I could lead myself and help others lead themselves out of this crisis.

We live in what Charles Dickens referred to as “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”. A crisis brings out the best and the worst in us, and reveals our character. Beyond the crisis, the world may not be as we know it today; so, it is time to change those stories and write new ones. And my foothold was the single question – who am I?

I am a narrative leadership coach. And during this lockdown, I have decided to rewrite my leadership narrative. I have decided to work on my Leadership ARC – Acceptance, Resilience, Curiosity.

1. Acceptance

Managing the uncertainty during this pandemic has become an important factor, as the media primes its audience to the everyday rise in the statistics of affected people and deaths. The brain is wired to look for threats; therefore during a crisis, it is difficult to stay centred. As a result, the imagination runs wild, leading to cognitive fusion and rumination. Fears of health and the future, and the boredom of the present seem to be the new problems facing my clients and friends. So, what should I do?

I should take a deep breath. And ask myself the three primary questions:

- ☐ *What am I feeling right now?*
- ☐ *What are my fears?*
- ☐ *What actions am I taking?*

The first question allows us to accept our feelings. I am a bit worried. I had some major plans in training and coaching this year, but with the slowdown, training budgets are going to be cut. I accept that my plans may not go as I thought. Accepting the present with detachment helps in moving to the next step.

Paradoxically, facing that challenge builds our greatest strengths—like courage and forgiveness. It is the place where we come face-to-face with ourselves and, in many ways, our demons. It is the greatest challenge that leaders face on their journey.

The third question is where I need to concentrate. At the acceptance stage, this means following the rules of the lockdown, social distancing, health care, and engaging with family members who suddenly don't have school or office.

The important point to remember is that it is not what happens to you, but how you handle it, that determines your success in life. Acceptance of all the external factors, and not reacting to them on an impulse helps us move to the next step in the leadership narrative ARC.

2. Resilience

The age old adage “This too shall pass” is the foundation of resilience. We can see this definition in the few faces that we see during the lockdown. The tirelessly-working doctors, the vegetable vendors, the neighbourhood grocer and baker, and yes, to our surprise, the face in the mirror. Resilience is a muscle. The more you exercise it, the more it develops.

Asking myself what this crisis is helping me develop was my first point. I ploughed on with the strengths I already had:

- ☐ *Connect with people, stay in touch, offer pro-bono coaching, be a sounding board to anyone who requires one.*
- ☐ *I had just signed a book contract with a publisher. I started writing diligently to complete the book before the targeted time.*
- ☐ *As a researcher, I had two invitations for publishing my work in international journals. I worked on polishing my thesis.*
- ☐ *My coaching moved completely online; so I started a group coaching program on self-leadership.*
- ☐ *I reworked the content I have written over the years for training, teaching and for my previous books. With it, I created online courses, short videos, blog posts and articles.*

In my resilience, I found two new avenues of income, and opportunities for long-term growth.

I was sowing my seeds. I was preparing for the world beyond this crisis. But how would that world be? Curiosity, my third step in the self-leadership ARC, could give me some clues.

3. Curiosity

What will the world unfold for me? I work from a place of curiosity. Curiosity leads us to growth, to cross the threshold. Crossing the threshold is about taking the risk—moving from the known to the unknown. Each person's threshold is unique, and depends on his or her comfort zone. Great results begin from great questions. Marilee Adams explains that if we want to lead ourselves and others well, asking curious questions rather than making assumptions will benefit us. So, my “curious” questions were:

- ☐ *What kind of growth do I want to be part of, beyond the crisis?*
- ☐ *What should I do now to be prepared?*
- ☐ *How can I know more?*

The first step was to educate myself. Not the mindless reading of newspapers with back-and-forth political fights and polarised opinions, but the movement of the world, its economy and its people. This answered my last question.

The results gave rise to industries and growth patterns. And there my first curious question was waiting for me. Should I work with people and sectors who are benefitted by the crisis, or should I work with people who need my support? In answering this, I went back to remembering who I am.

I am a leadership coach. I advocate self-leadership. I will work with anyone who is in need.

So now, I prepare myself. To coach, train and speak about leading yourself beyond the crisis.

My new programs – Leading Virtual Teams, Self-leadership in Times of Crisis, and Coaching People on the Dividing Line - are on my horizon.

You can work on your Leadership ARC, too.

1. Acceptance – Ask yourself

- ☐ *What am I feeling right now?*
- ☐ *What are my fears?*
- ☐ *What actions am I taking?*

2. Resilience –

- ☐ *What is this crisis preparing me for?*
- ☐ *What are the strengths I can leverage?*

3. Curiosity –

- ☐ *What kind of growth do I want to be part of, beyond the crisis?*
- ☐ *What should I do now, to be prepared?*
- ☐ *How can I know more?*

Let's move from isolation to connection, from fragmented to self-led leaders, from confused to optimistic. Beyond the horizon, there is a beautiful day waiting for us.



Dr Latha Vijaybaskar is a Leadership Coach and author. She coaches individuals and teams to be game-changers by rewriting their leadership journey. Her work focusses on the emerging generation and on leading in uncertain times.

She is the author of "21 Difficult Conversations - Tools to navigate your most important talk and master exactly what to say". Her next book, "Masterstroke – Reinventing leadership in times of uncertainty", will be released by the end of this year.

To transform your team, to race towards disruption or to make your emerging-generation teams game-changers, write to latha@drlathavijaybaskar.com Or, you can connect with her on <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lathavijaybaskar/> or www.drlathavijaybaskar.com

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FROM THE COMFORTABLE DILBERT CUBE TO FRACTIONAL CMO (CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER)

Right from my childhood, I have been fascinated by storytelling, advertising and business operations. But I never fathomed that these were my core strengths till I turned 32. When I was adjudged the topper of my batch of the Executive Education Program at the Indian Institute of Management-Lucknow, it strengthened my belief that I needed to build my competence around Marketing and Strategy.

Nevertheless, I continued to work as a full-time employee for more than two decades. Being on my own always remained at the periphery of my thought, but I could not extricate myself from the Dilbert Cube.

I started pivoting from full-time employee to marketing strategy consultant and keynote speaker in September 2018, when my first book, “Marketing Success Formula”, was published. Subsequently, I started receiving invitations to address business conferences, and was flooded with requests to consult with companies across industries, in the areas of Marketing and business growth.

Before pivoting though, I took a year and a half to study the market and build a personal brand. Before crafting my Fractional CMO value proposition, I had started meeting potential clients to understand their requirements and fine-tune my offerings accordingly.

14 *From the Comfortable Dilbert.....*

Finally, I took the plunge - from my job to the role of a Fractional Chief Marketing Officer. I was fairly well-armed with research, and I understood that there would be a strong surge in the need to outsource expertise in Marketing during these tough times. It's evident that though SMEs are cash-strapped and can't afford the fixed cost of a full-time Marketing Head, it would be fatal for them to not devise appropriate demand-generation methods and a brand strategy.

My experience as a strategic marketer has taught me to approach any business challenge through a 'Strategy First and Tactics Next' approach. This is also propelled by my belief that every challenge of an entrepreneur is starkly unique, and that the counter-marketing strategy has to be tailor-made. The solution has to be relevant to the current economic scenario, the industry the business belongs to, and how their consumers perceive the product during the prevalent crisis. Crisis or not, there has never been a generic solution, thus emphasizing the need to deep-dive, identify the causes and accordingly deliver the solution through an actionable framework.

For instance, one of my potential clients wanted to engage me to conduct a workshop on Digital Marketing. He was in a dilemma about how many people would enroll for the course during this pandemic. And so, he was not sure whether he should pay me my standard fee. A pragmatic approach led to a model where the fee was determined by the number of enrollments for the course. This modified model worked for both of us; while it reduced my client's risk considerably, I got an engagement at the same time. Thus, instead of taking a cookie-cutter approach, if challenges are met in novel ways conducive

to the client's need and situation, it would lead to a win-win situation always!

As the world is moving towards online business, there is a clear lack of depth in human connection and social interaction. There is nothing like meeting people in the physical space. But under the present circumstances, I will be using more of video conferencing in my consulting work. In every given situation and with every entrepreneur, our approach has to be exclusively customized. A more personalized way of working with clients has to be devised by quickly adapting to the new normal, based on their consumer's perception and other market forces. Also, delivering the service in a virtual/online mode reduces incidental expenses like travel, accommodation and food for clients. That's another advantage for them.

As a Marketing Strategist, my focus is on selling services like marketing and brand strategy development through consulting, speaking and workshops. Apart from selling my services, I think more value can be added to the audience through educational content which would help them navigate the uncertainty in the business environment with some clarity. I have used LinkedIn extensively to build my thought leadership by creating engaging content for my audience and deepening my connection with them to build affinity. This builds my personal brand.

I firmly believe that, as I begin this journey, I need to have an open-minded approach to pivoting multiple times (if necessary) in terms of my target market, value proposition and pricing models, based on the insights I gather.

16 *From the Comfortable Dilbert.....*

All this uncertainty poses a tremendous challenge for devising strategy. The goal of most strategies is to build an enduring competitive advantage by establishing clever market positioning or assembling the right capabilities and competencies for making or delivering an offering. As the world evolves, I must be willing to adapt accordingly: a key lesson I have learnt as a Marketing Strategist.



Rajesh Srinivasan is a Marketing Strategy consultant, author and keynote speaker. He works with entrepreneurs to grow their business and build powerful brands. He is an alumnus of Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow.

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PROSPERING FROM THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19

The speed at which this pandemic struck the world is quite extraordinary. While the toll it has taken on life at large is now quite evident, what is not clear is the economic cost that it will leave in its wake. However, it is increasingly becoming evident that Covid-19 is conquerable. As it turns out, it is not the apocalypse that will wipe out mankind from the face of this planet. Justifiably, the global financial markets have been in turmoil ever since this pandemic was born in China sometime in January 2020. The equity markets, especially, have fallen anywhere between 25% and 50% since the pre-Covid days, leading to a massive loss of wealth for investors globally. This has also created panic among people that they may lose their retirement money, which they have kept in mutual funds and pension funds.

For investors, here are the immediate reactions:

- 1. It is a loss only if you pull out your investment. Therefore, our suggestion is to hold on to the investments (be they in stocks or mutual funds) till the time the pandemic passes and we return to normalcy. **Don't sell now.***
- 2. Covid-19 has caused shutdowns and lockdowns in most countries of the world. This will have a significant impact on the global economy; 2020 will definitely go down as a very poor financial year.*

3. *When economies go through deep pain, can equity markets be far behind? No. They are also likely to be impacted globally. Assuming that the stock market turmoil started in Feb 2020, we expect the ripples to continue for at least 6 months (akin to ripples forming in a still lake when a stone is tossed into it). So, do not expect a recovery before July 2020.*

As an investor, what must you do in such times?

1. *Covid-19 has not only brought the world to a grinding halt, but has also brought in the dimension of social distancing. The business environment will take time to improve. As businesses may find it hard to earn money during this period, it is important to have sufficient liquidity to take care of any needs that may arise in the next 6 months. This can be done through short-term bank FDs or liquid funds. This will ensure that the ups and downs of the equity portfolio won't leave you in stress.*
2. *Re-evaluate your investments more thoroughly. While the stock market has been badly hit, some sectors will emerge relatively unscathed, compared with others. In our opinion, sectors like Travel, Hospitality and Auto will take time to recover. Sectors like IT, Healthcare, etc. could actually recover faster and return to normalcy quicker.*
3. *Most of us are working from our homes and living with much more flexibility than before. Therefore, this is the right time to check on your investments and see if they are fine-tuned to a rewarding future.*

Checklist for your investments (especially for the Covid-19 downturn)	
S.No.	Action
1	<i>Consolidate multiple bank accounts and investment accounts. Close the unused ones.</i>
2	<i>Ensure that all the investment accounts are jointly held, or they have nominations in place.</i>
3	<i>Create a statement of your net-worth and re-evaluate your financial goals for the future.</i>
4	<i>All your stocks and mutual funds are significantly down now. Re-evaluate them to ensure that you get rid of the bad ones and consolidate only the good ones.</i>
5	<i>Check how much investment you have in each asset class i.e., real estate, stocks, mutual funds, fixed deposits, life insurance, etc.</i>
6	<i>Discuss your investments with your spouse or partner, and let your near and dear ones know about them. Also, tell them how they can access the details regarding your investments in an emergency.</i>
7	<i>Ensure that you have some emergency money easily accessible in a short-term FD. This enough be to meet atleast 6 months' mandatory expenses.</i>
8	<i>If you are having cashflow issues, discuss it with your banker and seek a moratorium on your loan repayments.</i>
9	<i>Write a simple will to ensure that your instructions on dealing with your investments are clear.</i>

10	<i>Be positive and optimistic. This too shall pass. And one year down the line, these times will seem like a bad dream. Visualize a financially good time in the future.</i>
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4. As investors, we are both rational and emotional beings. So, my recommendation to you in these times is to stay away from a constant flow of news, especially the negative ones that may disturb your emotional state and cause you to act in an unprofitable manner. Most of us act emotionally; so, before we take any action on our investments, we need to check if it is a rational decision or not.

Friends, I am a Financial Sherpa running Finsherpa Investment Services, an investment advisory practice that helps people reach their financial goals in the best-suited manner, considering their temperament and risk appetite. This has been a testing time for all of us. The global markets have put our investors' wealth in deep discount. We have been trying to reach out to and talk to our investors, and advise them on the necessary actions to ensure that they do not end up taking any hasty decision.

The need of the hour is a deeper and conscious understanding of how investors may eventually benefit from this pandemic. We have always believed in a hands-on approach to our service: meeting clients face-to-face, understanding their needs, empathizing with their issues, giving recommendations for actions and helping them fulfill the same. However, thanks to the social distancing norm, we have had to relook at our client-engagement model. While it is important to hand-hold our clients during this difficult time (in re-evaluating their portfolio), we can do this in a myriad other ways, without actually meeting them in person.

<i>Pre-COVID/Post-COVID workflow - Finsherpa Investment Services</i>		
Event	Pre-Covid	During & Post-Covid
<i>Team meetings</i>	<i>Face-to-face team meetings would take place every morning at the office to plan the actions for the day, and to follow up on the previous day's actions.</i>	<i>Team meetings happen every morning on ZOOM. All the same aspects are discussed and actions taken, but we are now online.</i>
<i>Client interactions</i>	<i>Mobile calls & face-to-face review meetings.</i>	<i>Only mobile calls or Zoom meeting reviews - virtual meetings.</i>
<i>New client KYC (Know-Your-Client)</i>	<i>Earlier, this was done on paper by meeting the client in person.</i>	<i>Moved to a virtual model using the technology available online.</i>
<i>New client fact-finding meetings</i>	<i>Every new-client interview was physical, and would take place at the office.</i>	<i>It happens over a call using phone, Whatsapp or Zoom. No physical meetings.</i>
<i>Investment account opening process</i>	<i>Physical signatures were needed.</i>	<i>Now done virtually; no physical papers sought.</i>

While the process of digitizing all our actions has been a little challenging and unfamiliar, it has helped us in the following ways:

1. *Since we work from home, we have saved at least about 2 hours every day on office commute, and an additional 2 hours on other commutes (eg. for meetings).*
2. *Virtual meetings are usually time-bound and have an agenda; therefore, these meetings are far more productive.*
3. *Since we are based out of Chennai, a majority of our clients are in Chennai. However, this virtual model now throws open the opportunity to get my next client from Kashmir or California, because geography has become history for us.*
4. *We need fewer staff for the virtual operations, and we would, in future, be re-evaluating our team needs.*

It is our belief that Covid-19 will fundamentally alter the way in which we engage with our clients. We believe adopting a virtual model will drive better efficiency in our operations and benefit the client better. While Covid-19 has brought great misery to the world, it has also helped us change the way we work, for the better. Prospering from the pandemic is all about revisiting your financial goals and creating an optimal personal finance strategy to reach them. If you need help with creating such a strategy for yourself, get in touch with me at Babu.k@finsherpa.com. Happy to help you reach your financial peak.



Babu Krishnamoorthy, a Financial Sherpa, is on a mission to help a million people climb their financial peak. To know more about him, visit <https://www.linkedin.com/in/babu-krishnamoorthy-2782442> or www.babukrishnamoorthy.com

DISRUPTING THE CONSULTING BUSINESS

The consulting business has remained largely unchanged over the years: a leveraged delivery model, young talent undergoing apprenticeship under experienced consultants, established tools and techniques, hunt, eat/farm and harvest sales models, and a high fixed cost model. The only major change has been in the revenue model; despite the industry clinging to time- and material-based invoicing, it has been forced by clients to adopt a results-based fee model, of late.

In most of the client engagements, consulting companies deploy resources at client sites to deliver the work. For a consultant, travelling to and back from client sites every week is one of the worst elements of his lifestyle. COVID-19 makes this type of deployment of resources impossible, and stops the revenue stream of consulting companies. Can we reinvent the consulting model, so that it enables us to deliver projects - especially in a facilitative manner - remotely?

Typically, the offerings of a consulting company have two parameters: type of solution and type of delivery.

The type of solution can consist of either a method/framework/tool, like Lean, Six Sigma, TPM, Agile, etc., or a problem-solving approach that identifies the root cause of the customer's challenge.

In terms of delivering engagements, consultants work

- a) as a pair of hands, in which they do all the work,*
- b) as a coach or facilitator, where they advise and clients do the work, or*
- c) by deploying their resources to guide client teams in a model akin to apprenticeship.*

With tool-based consulting, consulting companies are forced to adopt a facilitative consulting approach; they work closely with client teams, train and build competencies, and work with the client organizations on delivering long-term transformation. On the other hand, there is method-based consulting, which is delivered using a pair-of-hands delivery model. In this, the consulting organizations do the heavy lifting of project delivery, with client teams responsible only for data delivery and implementation trials/pilots. These are projects such as strategy development, market research, IT implementation, etc. There are plenty of examples of consulting using this method, while adopting a problem-solving approach. In these types of projects, data analysis and root cause analysis are done. External functional experts develop solutions that solve the problem.

The platform innovation shift

The consulting industry has mostly focused on product innovation : better solutions, new solutions, more reliable products, etc. The net result has been that consulting companies which have a superior consulting offering (product), better asset and better customer relationship have been successful. Platform innovation is about adding new features and capabilities that will deliver increased value for the customers.

At my firm, we have looked at innovation management consulting and focused on adding new innovative elements. These innovations have helped us address the pains the industry faces, and opens up new opportunities.

Consulting innovation

These innovation efforts have been pioneered by Innovation360, a Stockholm-based organization focused on innovation consulting. At the center of the offering is a product that is based on the research work of its founder, Magnus Penker (2017). The founders of the Innovation360 group have studied what innovation capabilities an organization must have, to develop and commercialize opportunities. InnoSurvey® is a cutting-edge AI-powered database that organizes the innovation capabilities of over 5000 organizations in 105 countries.

Using these tools and a unique model of licensing very experienced practitioners who undergo a rigorous accreditation process, Innovation360 and its licensed practitioners can deliver a non-leveraged consulting product at a speed unimaginable for traditional consulting companies. The consulting solutions are offered in 3 specific areas:

- 1. Innovation analytics*
- 2. Innovation management strategy*
- 3. Ideation management*

We recognize 7 types of innovation, along the same lines as Trott (2008) did: Product, Process, Organization, Management, Production, Commercial/Marketing and Service innovation. We have chosen to deliver consulting innovation based on the following types of innovation.

Product Innovation: *InnoSurvey® and Ideation360® represent two very powerful AI-based products that utilize the cloud platform to deliver innovation management consulting. InnoSurvey® provides the ability to an experienced professional to analyze an organization's innovation aspirations, capabilities, culture and process in a time frame that wouldn't be feasible with the traditional consulting model. The product allows practitioners to deliver insights linking capabilities, leadership style and process on the one hand to aspirations on the other. Thereby, they provide a roadmap for change management, strengthening capabilities and leveraging known pockets of excellence, all using a data-based approach. Similarly, Ideation360® is a SaaS product that allows organizations to crowdsource innovation ideas, run ideation campaigns, build on ideas, cluster ideas using AI and run hypothesis-based testing to shortlist ideas.*

Organization Innovation: *Innovation360, its partner organizations and licensed practitioners are organized in a unique model, where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts -but without the cost of a large organization. It enables experienced consultants to come together in a non-leveraged consulting model to deliver world-class innovation consulting using the products described earlier at a significantly lower cost as compared with traditional consulting firms.*

Process Innovation: *A powerful distinguishing feature of our offering is our ability to use technology: artificial intelligence, a cloud-based model and online delivery. Our offerings, such as innovation assessments, rapid ideation/hackathons, master classes, etc. can be delivered online using applications such as Zoom,*

Gotowebinar and other such collaboration platforms. Teams can work with us remotely to solve innovation challenges which, otherwise, would have required travel.

During the COVID-19 crisis, these innovations have offered us a powerful way to redefine the way consulting is delivered. Several engagements have been initiated globally by the innovation360 ecosystem. Consultants across the globe can collaborate and deliver tremendous value to our customers, and deliver innovation in a very short time during this unforeseen lockdown.

As far as we see, these innovations will redefine the consulting world.

- ☐ *They will benefit customers: higher value in a shorter period for a lower price/fee.*
- ☐ *They will benefit consultants: less travel and more efficiency.*

Every crisis is an opportunity, and this one has been a game-changer for me.

Citations in this chapter

Magnus Penker (2017). Magnus Penker, Peter Junermark, and Sten Jacobson. 2017. How to Assess and Measure Business Innovation, Apple Books.

Trott (2008). Trott, P.2008. Innovation Management and New Product Development. 4th ed. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.



Krishnan Naganathan is a consultant with more than 25 years of experience. His purpose is to help India and its entrepreneurs be global leaders in innovation. He firmly believes that organizations can systematically approach innovation by ensuring that their capabilities and processes are aligned with their ambition.

If you would like to understand, measure and enhance your innovation capabilities, do write to him at krishnan@thinkhorizonconsulting.com

You can also connect with Krishnan on LinkedIn (bit.ly/krnLnK), and follow his blog (bit.ly/krnBlog) and videos (bit.ly/KRNVideo).

He not busy being born is busy dying.

– Bob Dylan

It seems like a dead-end. Any direction I look in, there only seems to be highwalls, impediments.

Why?

I had it all planned. Yet, the forces around me seem to have their own plans.

I feel stuck. Neither forward nor backward. No retreat and no surrender. Just standing still where I am, when this is the time for me to move fast. Blazingly. Forward.

Why?

This question keeps rattling inside my brain. Why? Why me? Why now?

Why is this happening to me now?

This state of flux. It's like I'm swimming in quicksand.

Is it because of my abilities, or the lack of them? Did I not move fast, learn more, stay at the cutting edge?

Doubt. Self-doubt. This is followed by the inevitable frustration that I take out on people around me. Misplaced anger. Panic. And immobility.

I need to think of a solution, but the mind is blank.

Empty!

A scenario I've faced in the past. A life-changing event that has pretty much directed how my future unfolded from there on.

Never again.

My fate, **my** future, **my** hands. Always.

My mentors and friends have helped me get back on track. My brand is separate from that of my company. At any point, I need to have multiple sources of income.

I will have several fires burning - creative fire in the brain, broth bubbling in the kitchen.

Repurposing

That is my pivot. To paraphrase a Tamil saying: One stone, many mangoes.

What have I done thus far?

How can I re-use that knowledge?

How can I repurpose that knowledge for the new world, for new clients?

All of this starts with the key question: Who am I?

*Followed by: Who am I to **you**?*

I am a marketer, a non-conformist, one who wants to do something different - and gets it done. Pompous? No. Self-aware, especially after advice from my mentors. I know who I am.

I help you find out who you are. I help you communicate the same to your target segment. I am an outlier marketing catalyst.

How do I repurpose that?

As an entrepreneur, I start ventures, sometimes in parallel. Some succeed, some don't.

As a market researcher, I find out the who and the why. I help you take effective marketing decisions.

As an outlier marketer, I help you with growth and scale.

I present research and marketing papers across countries.

As a communicator and knowledge disseminator, I use all the tools at my disposal to spread the message.

Research, Marketing, Growth: I look back to find a trunkful of content.

I repurpose that and it takes different avatars.

Speaking, virtual summits, videos, online courses, books, podcasts.

I prepare for the forks that will continue to come on my path. Some forks I shall design myself, because choices need to be made.

You may think I'm fickle-minded, with so many interests. I say I'm flexible and am creating multiple sources of revenue, across channels and modes.

In these Covid curfew times, my marketing consulting and writing continue to grow. I have committed to bring out ten books, each of which will evolve into a keynote and a masterclass - offline and digital. I've launched new service streams focusing on consulting, content repurposing and organising virtual events.

These are pivots, long time in the making.

As the Thakur in Sholay said, "Loha garam hai, maar do hathoda." The iron is hot, strike the hammer.

I'm planning for life after Covid, with compressed budgets and opportunities that I need to create myself.

As a speaker, it is now the time for me to build my own stage.

What about you?

Look within. Reflect on all that you have done and gained in your career. Write it all down, however insignificant it may seem. Now, sit and connect all the dots. This is the time for you to use your experience and knowhow, and repurpose them for the short-term future.

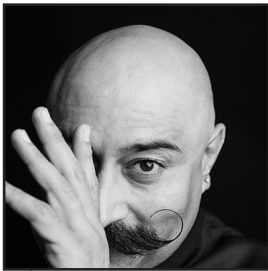
What does your market need today? How will your new market look like, tomorrow? What are the forks on the road?

• *Born.* • *Reborn.* • *Reinvent.* • *Repeat.*

This is the case for me, as an outlier marketer, a parallel entrepreneur and a raconteur. This is the case for us as professional speakers.

He not busy being born is busy dying.

– Bob Dylan



Pravin Shekar is an Outlier Marketer and a raconteur. Unconventional marketing is his forte. When the world moves one way, you need to move another way: that's his philosophy. This going-against-the-grain attitude helps him find opportunity in every crisis. A recipient of the American

Marketing Association's "Emerging Leader" award, Pravin has written 4 books and is set to bring out 5 more, on various aspects of Marketing.

If you need to shake up your marketing strategy and re-gear your growth, reach out to him at mic@pravinshekar.com

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BRAND VS BRANDING - WHAT IS IMPORTANT DURING A CRISIS?

The world is talking about how business, relationships and our existence may change because of the current pandemic. Core industries are looking at “work-from-home” being an option: something they did not believe in, earlier. In addition, we are seeing technological changes. Education dissemination is changing, too. But even when everything around the world is changing, there is one thing that cannot change for most people – their personal brand. Be it entrepreneurs, professionals or celebrities, the personal brand of any individual does not change unless a life-threatening situation changes their very existence and as a consequence, their personal value system changes.

However, a person’s personal branding will change at times like this. How can that happen?

Well, let us understand the two concepts.

Personal brand is you being authentic and consistent. It means living by your core values and demonstrating them in your day-to-day interaction with people – through your behaviour – online and offline. Your core values – how you live your life – determine how you make decisions and behave with people. Behaviours can be adapted to any social setting. And as humans, we are competent enough to do so. However, when you are stressed, your natural behaviour comes across. This is purely determined by your values and personal traits

like beliefs, thoughts, feelings and actions. Behavioural scientists have found that your traits and values do not change under 'normal' situations. Hence, I can confidently say that your values actually determine how consistent you will be as a brand. Higher the demonstration of values in your behaviour, higher your brand value. This is the base of the iceberg of the personal brand (the brand itself – the values). You need to keep in mind that only when you are genuine, authentic and consistent in the way you behave, will you be able to demonstrate your core non-compromise values strongly. Remember, people do business with you only when they **trust** you. Once you have established your **credibility** and **authenticity**, people want to be associated with you.

Personal Branding, on the other hand, is the marketing you do to build your personal brand – including how you project yourself. It has the following elements:

- ❑ Signature image – Your look or appearance, the way you write your name, your signature, your website and your social media pages.
- ❑ The way you reach out to your target audience. Your emotional connect (remember: facts tell, stories sell), your value proposition, and your on-line and offline presence. And finally, how do people perceive you? People's perception about you is a result of their cultural, social, political and economic beliefs. This is where your ability to flex or adapt plays a role. The more you are able to adapt yourself in a given environment or situation without changing your core, the more accepted and valued you will be by different audiences and markets. As your market/ geogra-

phy expands, you become a more influential and powerful brand.

So, when the going gets tough, and you are able to work with your core values and add value to people's lives, your brand value will only increase.

The only thing you might want to change is how you share this story of your personal brand with your target audience. You'd focus more on digital mediums of communication now. The ways in which you will sell your story (the storyline and connect) will definitely undergo a change.

- ❑ **Your on-screen appearance** – *The way you appear on-screen would definitely need to be looked at. Remember, only your face and upper body are seen on-screen. So you need to learn techniques to create a powerful first impression. Your make-up, accessories, hair style and colour contrasts need to be detailed out more carefully – 55% of your communication happens through your face and so, you must ensure that you make your face look attractive. Nothing on your face should be distracting. I strongly believe this: “good looks are in your genes; looking good is in your hands”. So, look good, look attractive.*
- ❑ **Digital behaviour and presence** – *How you respond to questions on various social media platforms would now be observed more. Your behaviour with people, known and unknown to you, would also impact your brand image. You need to be aware of what posts you are sharing on various platforms - are they aligned to your personal values and goals, and are they consistent across all platforms?*

- ❑ **Communication** – With voice and facial expressions being closely monitored on digital platforms, you may want to be mindful of the impact of your voice, tonality, gestures and facial expressions on your webinars, videos, etc. You may want to re-skill yourself in some of these areas to create a more powerful impact. Also, with the attention span of people being shorter in the digital world, your message has to be crisper, compact and powerful. No scope for being verbose anymore. The storyline needs to have an emotional connect. And to enjoy top-of-the-mind recall, the frequency at which you are interacting with your audience has to be high. Do you remember advertisements that carry jingles? Well, they are catchy and crisp, and are shown so many times that the audience is easily able to recall them.

If people do not remember your name in the top 3 to 4 people when they are talking about experts from your industry, you have to pull up your branding: look deeper, focus on your brand (the value you offer) and then, the branding.

Like I say in my personal branding model, be consistent and congruent, and you can thrive any time. A premium brand does not compete- it just creates its own niche.

This year, make personal branding a part of your business plan.



Nandita Pandey is India's leading Personal Branding Coach, a professional speaker and an author. She coaches and trains India's leading corporates, entrepreneurs, CEOs and celebrities.

She has written the book "Dressology – The Science of Power Dressing", and hosts a Hindi podcast Brandify. She is a columnist in a magazine, too. Nandita has received many national and international awards, and been featured in magazines, newspapers and TV channels for her work.

You can send her your queries on Personal Branding at atme@nanditapandey.com or at www.nanditapandey.com. You can follow her videos and blogs at www.linkedin.com/in/coachnandita and www.facebook.com/coachnandita.

TOOLS TO UNLOCK YOUR BUSINESS

All of my immediate plans, ideas and dreams stood still. The global pandemic and the consequent lockdown knocked the wind out of me, like it did for many of you.

All that happened in the initial few days was utter chaos, madness and despair. As a High Performance Business Coach and professional speaker on Business Finance, many of my pre-scheduled speaking engagements and coaching assignments were cancelled. And, if that weren't enough, life also removed the utter joys of summoning household help every time you needed support! To this, add two teenagers, zero outing, a conked washing machine and a dislocated elbow. Phew!

With uncertainty looming large, I did not know how I would cope with this crisis. Filled with rage and despair, the only thought that filled me was, "When will this end?"

Thankfully, within a few days of the lockdown, I attended an online meditation program conducted by The Art of Living. And it dawned on me that I had so many things to be grateful for! My family is safe and secure, I'm working from the comfort of my home, teaching my kids life skills, and with the help of technology, contributing to the high performance of businesses, conducting online sessions and utilizing my time productively. The more I thought about it, the list of things I should be grateful for seemed endless.

This brought about a transformative shift in my mindset.

And that's how I discovered not one but seven ways in which you can unlock the true potential of your business (and honestly, the potential of life itself) in these turbulent times and beyond. Here's my attempt to share with you what the last few days have taught me.

1.Remove the unwanted

I resolved to do away with the 3Cs - Complain, Crib, Cringe. They don't serve me in any way, or permit me to grow. I replaced them with Commitment, Capability and Contribution.

2. Method to the madness

Set up a routine. My day starts by 5am. After an online workout session, yoga, preparation of breakfast and lunch, I get started with my work.

3. The art of collaboration

I collaborated with my family. Each of us is assigned tasks to complete. We share the workload of household chores. This gives me time to explore professional possibilities.

4. Take on those challenges

I started thinking solutions. I leveraged technology, which has led to my online interviews, webinars and podcasts, and sharing relevant content on YouTube and LinkedIn. My articles have got featured on other websites. And the more I learnt, the more was I able to apply that in my business!

5. Nourish your body, mind and soul

It's important to nourish your mind, body and soul. While exercise is for the body, I have kept my mind active by writing my next book and coaching leaders. For my soul, I rely on yoga and meditation.

6. Capitalizing on time

I have about two extra hours on hand every day since the lockdown, because I work from home. I utilize this time to sharpen my skills and improve my keynote speech. I tune in to interesting talks while cooking, and gain a lot from online courses. To learn as much as possible is the key.

7. Negativity at bay

Be it negative news about the number of pandemic-led deaths or the supposed cures, I have kept them away. Apart from the interruptions that are a result of working from home, there are umpteen other distractions, especially the non-stop pings on the phone. I took a conscious call about this. I now check my phone only at regular intervals, so that it doesn't eat into my productive time.

What did the seven forces of realization and action translate into? Results. While I may not be able to quantify the results, I know they make me feel good. I feel engaged, focussed, positive and hopeful.

I have also learnt to pause and reflect. Earlier, I was under the mistaken impression that I was practising gratitude. But I realised I wasn't. So, I consciously started ending each day with an expression of gratitude and prayer. I started discovering my inner-self, and connecting with it. I cherished the family meal times.

As I shifted my perspective, things started falling in place.

- ☐ *Business enquiries started coming in.*
- ☐ *I was appointed as the Chief Advisor for the Confederation of Indian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.*
- ☐ *My book “What the Finance” became a bestseller again.*
- ☐ *I developed different pricing models for my Coaching and Speaking services.*
- ☐ *The opportunity to be part of this book came by.*

I realized how the universe responds positively when you shift your outlook.

While I may not be able to do anything about factors that are not in my control, I can certainly control things that are in my ambit, to get back on the path to high performance.

Here’s an easy tool for you to unlock your business –
The Action Matrix.

- 1. Select the top 3 areas you want to work on, with a corresponding goal in each area.*
- 2. In each area, state 3 actions you want to perform, that will take you closer to your goal. Thereby, you create your action matrix.*
- 3. My action matrix is given below for reference. Customize it according to your needs.*
- 4. You can use this matrix format for yourself or for your business.*

5. Other possible areas you may want to work on could be financial, health, relationships, etc. Once you master your specific areas, you can move on to other areas or to higher levels in the same area.

Areas identified for high performance	Goal	Action 1	Action 2	Action 3
<i>Personal</i>	<i>To take charge</i>	<i>Remove the unwanted.</i>	<i>Method to the madness.</i>	<i>Figure out solutions.</i>
<i>Professional</i>	<i>Get opportunities</i>	<i>Create content for webinars & write more.</i>	<i>Look for collaboration and networking.</i>	<i>Develop business models.</i>
<i>Spiritual</i>	<i>Inner peace</i>	<i>Twice-a-day online meditation.</i>	<i>Practise gratitude.</i>	<i>Nourish the body, mind and soul.</i>

As I write this, what emerges is that it is important to adapt, lead with empathy, and re-learn with rigour in order to balance your personal, professional, spiritual and social values in the journey of life.



Sangeeta Shankaran Sumesh is a High Performance Business Coach, professional speaker and bestselling author. She is on a mission to serve by educating, empowering and elevating businesses. She works with leaders and teams on financial growth and high performance. She has a rich corporate

experience of twenty-five years, having held leadership positions with multinationals. The author of three books, she's a Chartered Accountant and Management Accountant, and has completed an executive education program from Harvard Business School.

For your coaching requirements or speaking engagements, you can reach Sangeeta at sss@sss.coach. You can read more about her at www.sss.coach and

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sangeetasumesh/>

Look for her handle "Sang Sha Sum" on YouTube / FB / Instagram.

ROCK YOUR QUARANTINE THE ARMY WAY

Honestly, it was only Covid-19 that brought “quarantine” into my vocabulary. Out of simple curiosity, I approached my favourite friend Google aunty and discovered that quarantine is “a state, period, or place of isolation”.

“Have I been in quarantine all my life?” I asked myself.

In the 60 years from 1961 (when I joined Sainik School at the age of 10) to now (when I am 69 years young), I find that I have been quarantined all the way with isolation, limited resources and opportunities, and constrained freedom most of the time.

In school, we lived in a campus bounded by a 6-foot high wall. The watchmen at the gate looked like prison guards. We followed a strict routine. We ate whatever was served; we had no choice. There were no in-between meals. Our pocket money hardly sufficed for anything other than a rare samosa once in a while from the tuck shop.

Life at the National Defence Academy (NDA) and Indian Military Academy (IMA) was certainly better. A sense of achievement, reinforced by a feeling of progress, made us more tolerant of isolation, the lack of facilities and limited ‘liberties’ (a name given to the Sunday out-pass, which was granted as a reward once in a while).

34 years in the Indian Army helped me savour a variety of flavours of quarantine. My first posting took me to YakhLa (near the well-known NathuLa) pass. Gaping endlessly at the snow-clad mountain peaks was all one could do for entertainment. We lived in a picket with the soldiers. Ate the food from their langar (cook-house). And occasionally came down to the officers' mess to exercise our taste buds. There was no electricity; we managed with a lantern. We did 'enjoy' the bright light of the petromax in the officers' mess, though.

Poonch, in Jammu & Kashmir, was a different flavour of quarantine. I was the only officer in the unit. There is a certain formality in the socialization among ranks in the army culture. I utilized my time in visiting pickets to check the quality of rations, and if the jawans were getting their entitled quota. I could occasionally socialize with one or two junior officers on the picket. We could share a beer with them sometimes. Such were our luxuries!

The experience of deserts was altogether a different "cup of sand". It left an indelible mark on me. It was January 1984. I had just passed out from the Defence Services Staff College, a feather that every officer likes to have on his cap. I was posted as the logistics officer, popularly called DQ. The brigade was on a desert exercise for 90 days. I joined them in Phalsund, a small village having a population of about 250, located 150 km or so from Jodhpur. I was put up in a nice, cosy tent, called a 180 pounder. The tents were distanced (not social distancing, for sure) so as to not give away our position to the enemy. Each one of us lived on a bucket of water a day. Experience soon taught us to use half the bucket, avoiding dipping the mug more than halfway into the water to avoid disturbing the finely sedimented

sand at the bottom. We had limited rations (part of the exercise) and no in-between meals. One ingredient we learnt to expect in everything we ate was sand. It found its way everywhere, no matter what we did. Gradually, it became a part of our taste-culture.

When we came back to our base in Bhuj, a small unknown town (more unknown before the earthquake of Jan 2001), it felt like heaven! My childlike excitement at the sight of a tap with running water made my wife laugh. Having a shower after 3 months was both exciting and luxurious. Electricity and gadgets like the fridge and fans (we didn't have air-conditioners, back then) after three months under the sun and petromax, surely was luxury.

Besides Bhuj, I also enjoyed peace stations like Dinjan, Ramgarh, Dinapore and Faizabad. These are just names to most people, but are an integral part of our beloved motherland. I have no complaint. The Army posted me to Jalandhar, Bangalore, Jodhpur, Bareilly and Delhi, too.

Today, in this lockdown, I hear people cribbing and complaining. They say they can't pass time. They are bored. Thanks to our military training, we never get bored. I realize that people in metros have taken malls and clubs for granted. Now, you are compensated with family time, self-development opportunities, and catching up on all you wanted to do but could not find time for, earlier. I have been at it with a vengeance. Believe me, the last 10 days have been the busiest days of my life. I have so much to do!

Did we ever breathe such clean air in Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore in the last 20 years? I can hear birds chirping outside my house, something I was deprived of in the

last 15 years in Mumbai. Dolphins found on the coast of Mumbai, Neelgai in a mall in NOIDA and deer sitting on a road in Delhi are signs of nature reminding us of its entitled space.

We have a lot to learn from Covid-19. Mother Nature is asking us to slow down, de-clutter, and stop taking our comforts, our privileges and the people in our life for granted. We are being asked to respect what we have and be grateful for it. In the Army, they say “Leave is a privilege, not a birthright”. Let us take the spirit of this quote to our hearts and understand that malls, clubs, Uber and Metro rail are all privileges, not birthrights. Let’s be grateful for the electricity that gives us comforts such as gadgets, fans, air-conditioners and even the internet. Even our lifeline –the mobile phone - depends on electricity.

Let us focus on all that we continue to have and enjoy, and not on what we don’t have. This wisdom is at the very heart of the art of living.



Brigadier Sushil Bhasin is a time investment strategist and global speaker, and the author of three books, including “Million Dollar Second”, published by CNBC. He is a proud founder-member of the Professional Speakers Association of India (PSAI). A TEDx speaker and corporate trainer, he is on a mission to create a world that is conscious of time as a vital resource. He delivers “High Impact Virtual Engagement” webinars.

You can read more about him at www.BrigSushilBhasin.com and write to him at sushil@BrigSushilBhasin.com.

SHARPEN YOUR AXE: REDUCING NVA

As Sir Abraham Lincoln once said, “Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.” In today’s scenario, where efficiency is the top priority of any organization, this “sharpening the axe” will be treated as a Non-Value-Added activity (necessary but not adding any value). On the shop floor, value-added activities are those that transform raw materials into finished goods that the customer is willing to pay for.

Mine is an industry where the delivery schedules of finished goods are planned months in advance, based on the requirements of the automotive assembly line. The production plan is prepared, and each department works to fulfil the needs of the shop floor. We completed the weekly review meeting on Thursday, 19 March 2020. As a strategy, we’re prepared for a lot of things. Whether it’s a seasonal shift in sales or an unexpected employee absence, we have to step in and cover. A risk mitigation plan is vital for any IAFT (International Automotive Task Force) 16949-certified organization.

When a national lockdown was announced from the midnight of 24 March 2020, factories and manufacturing firms received this information as a shock. My company was no different. Since we are a tier-2 component supplier in the automotive industry, supplies for our assembly

line is our top priority. Calls started pouring in from customers, enquiring about the material in transit, the probable supply chain interruptions and our readiness to overcome those. Transporters refused to move their trucks, causing a total breakdown of the supply chain: from raw material to finished goods. An assembly line in an OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) is very critical. A delay of even a minute in one part disturbs the whole supply chain, impacting a long chain of tier-1, 2 and 3 suppliers.

Our operations were brought to a grinding halt. Manufacturing cannot implement “work from home”, as raw material needs to be fed, and finished goods need to be inspected before being dispatched. Machines have to run, to produce the output required for sale. Our casual laborers started raising concerns regarding their daily wages.

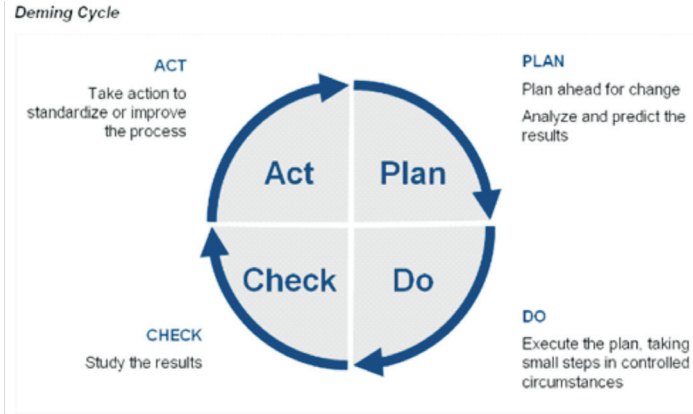
The situation resulted in a complete loss, as we were neither able to sell the finished goods nor convert the raw material. Employees’ salaries & supplier payments also became burning issues. We knew that our cash flow would be compromised, and would have a devastating impact on the organization.

Amidst the crisis, I suggested that we convert this adversity into an opportunity by working on our Non-Value-Added activities (NVAs).

As a certified Six Sigma professional and a lead auditor, I was able to lead the team. We quickly adopted the new technology platforms for communication and got an approval from the Management for a cross-functional team to get server access for relevant data. New processes were defined to co-ordinate between the teams.

50 Sharpen your Axe: Reducing NVAs

Using the Deming Cycle of PDCA (Plan Do Check and Act), we devised a comprehensive course of action to reduce NVAs in order to increase productivity. This was in anticipation that we would be able to cover up these losses within the next 1 year.



All the NVAs pertaining to documentation and training were listed.

1. Documentation

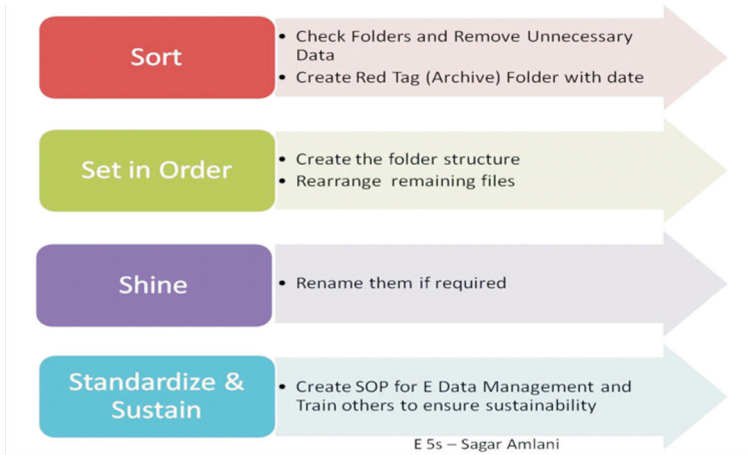
Completing PPAP (Production Part Approval Process), quality objectives & KPIs were reviewed. All pending customer complaints were discussed, to highlight the probable root causes, creating a fish-bone diagram which can be verified once operations resume. Cross-functional team video calls were set up to discuss & update FMEA (Failure Mode Effective Analysis).

2. Management Reviews

The dashboard was upgraded based on inputs from our Management. This enabled better visibility and data analysis for taking better business decisions.

3. Training

Internal and external training modules were planned and scheduled for various departments using new platforms, thereby up-scaling the employee experience and engagement.



4. Electronic 5S

Server access was granted with proper IT restrictions, and each manager was trained in e5S (Electronic 5S). 5S is a Japanese methodology.

This action plan has kept the team engaged. Also, it has given them the flexibility to work at their own time, except for a 2-hour call every day. This flexibility has been given to them, understanding that being at home brings additional responsibilities in its wake. Training modules have been recorded and shared, along with questions to verify their effectiveness. As a result of all this, a higher degree of positivity, engagement and ownership is evident in the team members. The bonds

52 Sharpen your Axe: Reducing NVAs

between team members have been strengthened. The new ways of working faster, bringing automation into documentation, are also adding fresh enthusiasm.

Are you stuck in a similar situation, where production activities have been affected?

Do you have a break-down of plant maintenance?

Don't worry. Just follow the steps given below to have an increased engagement within your team, and to improve productivity while operations have been closed temporarily:

- 1. Identify across-functional team*
- 2. List down the NVAs*
- 3. Define your PDCA*
- 4. Implement Electronic 5S*

Note: *With increasing data, Electronic 5S is very important for any organization for better data retrieval, leading to faster decision-making.*

Remember, Productivity = Efficiency × Effectiveness.



Sagar Amlani is a professional speaker who empowers individuals to see opportunities hidden in adversities. He works with organizations to develop an "autonomous work culture", creating symphony within the organization.

He is a living example of finding opportunities in adversity. His humble background has always been the backbone of his values and ethics.

As a "commended profile" of 2019 on LinkedIn, he coaches individuals towards LinkedIn mastery. The host of LinkedIn Local- Hyderabad, he is a go-getter and a natural giver. He inspires the youth by sharing his life lessons and teaching them the values required to become a successful visionary leader.

Sagar speaks on

- Autonomous work culture
- Building humane connections
- Leveraging LinkedIn for profession and business.

You can reach him through his LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sagar-amlani/>

To get solutions to your productivity issues, send him your questions at sagar.amlani@hotmail.co.uk

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PIVOTING FROM DIGITAL MARKETING TO DIGITAL SELLING

Covid-19 has dealt a gut-wrenching blow to the economy. Businesses across domains in all countries have been affected. Given an uncertain future, businesses have heavily clamped down on expenses. The first in the firing line is the marketing budget. It's the most expendable item. TV campaigns, newspaper ads, radio spots and paid digital campaigns have been put on hold. What's the point of advertising when the shops are shut and consumers have been advised not to step out of their homes?

We run a company called Breathe Digital. It is a digital marketing firm helping clients with their digital and social media strategies. And so, we have a front row view of the difficulties our clients are facing.

The primary focus of any company is to get the cash flow going again. While the marketing department might have gone quiet, the sales department will now go on overdrive. It is important to regain lost customers and add new accounts for the company to survive and thrive. We noticed this trend across our clients and across industries.

Thankfully, as a digital company, we have been pivoting our business for the past year: shifting from digital marketing to digital selling. What this means is that the focus of our consulting is to help increase leads and sales conversions using digital strategies that have

a direct impact on the bottom line. In other words, social selling.

Instead of intrusive sales tactics, social selling mostly involves a “pull” strategy, where you make customers come to you at a time when they have an intention to purchase. This is best done by providing them with the information or answers that help them solve their need.

The beauty of social selling is that it facilitates friendly, low-pressure engagement with prospective customers. Since the customer has higher purchase intent, it requires less persuasion. Also, the conversion ratio is much higher than in conventional selling.

Micro-target the decision makers and decision influencers: For any deal to go through or for a purchase to take place, there are influencers and decision makers. Digital selling strategies use techniques that help pinpoint these two important sets of people. Paid advertising on Google, Facebook and LinkedIn will have even more significance, as it gives you the ability to micro-target so that only the correct segment of people will see your advertisements. This will avoid wastage and unwanted spillage of advertising money, and help you get greater bang for your buck.

Fewer physical events and more online presence: Before the Covid-19 pandemic, B2B companies were spending over 40% of their marketing budget on physical events like conventions and conferences, and less than 6% on digital marketing. This ratio will now change significantly. With a near-clampdown on events (and even when this rule is relaxed), companies will be wary of organizing offline events. Instead, marketers and sales heads will take a much more serious look at how they can leverage digital channels to improve sales.

Companies will look at alternative ways of selling. They will turn to recreating the in-person experience online by hosting interactive webinars, teleconferencing, online sales pitches and group Slack channels, and using other similar digital channels. There will definitely be a firmer push for digital.

More businesses will embrace e-commerce: *The pandemic has taught businesses, especially those that rely on physical stores, a very bitter lesson. It has forced many shops to shut down; their business has ground to a complete halt. On the other hand, these offline businesses notice that e-commerce companies are still functioning, and that deliveries are still taking place. Every business will now want to have their e-commerce presence, either on their own or by piggybacking on other e-commerce portals. This will open up a major push for creating e-commerce portals and apps.*

More people will be online: *The pandemic-induced lockdown has seen a sharp increase in internet consumption. While people are cooped up in their homes, they will still need to connect with their friends and families. Brands are aware of this trend, and they will reach customers where they are. On the contrary, we are seeing reports of many newspapers and radio channels struggling. Many have been forced to stop their physical production, and have moved online. While this has been happening over the last few years, the pandemic has hastened this trend. This means that more advertising money will shift online. Dentsu Aegis Network, a large digital conglomerate, surveyed 155 of their clients and found that there will be a 14% shift of the marketing and advertising budget to digital.*

Migration to cloud and remote working will grow rapidly: *If there is one important lesson that corporate honchos have learnt from this lockdown, it is that working from home is not as bad as they thought. The pandemic has forced offices to shutter down, and all employees now work from home. This presages a tectonic shift in how offices will be run in future. More and more people will work remotely. Software and work applications will be hosted online on the cloud. Thus, there will be greater demand for team collaboration tools and apps that will help improve the productivity of employees.*

Without doubt, this once-in-a-lifetime pandemic has initiated a fundamental shift in the way businesses function. In the time to come, there will be a greater push towards digital, with a sharp focus on business development. It is now time for any business, immaterial of its size, geography or domain, to actively embrace digital for its growth.



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President of the Professional Speakers Association of India.

No matter which domain you specialize in, Kiruba urges you to use digital effectively to improve your sales. You can get in touch with him through these links:

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www.Kiruba.Pro (professional speaking website)

It was yet another normal day in office for me.

I was sitting at a height of 18,000 feet above sea level, manning my body of troops who are deployed over a stretch of 30 kilometers: each set of men separated by approximately by 1 to 1.5 km between them, with no eye contact between posts. There is no internet or mobile connectivity at the posts. The communication between posts is through the age-old line or wired communication, which is prone to disruptions from the snapping of lines for various reasons. Troops, apart from keeping a sharp vigil on the enemy and their movements, have also got to battle hostile climate, isolation, uncertainty and lack of accurate information. The temperature, dipping to between -20 and -30 degrees Celsius, makes it acutely difficult to sustain anything. Troops don't have a chance to venture out, as this will expose them to enemy fire. They are, in effect, cut off from the outside world as if there were no communication lines. Inter-post communication is also a challenge owing to the constant disruptions in line communication. The above-mentioned conditions can potentially kill the morale of even the highly spirited. Under these trying circumstances, it is my responsibility to maintain the morale and high spirits of my men.

My command post was away from the outposts where my troops were deployed. Movement between my command post and the forward posts was restricted due to the constant vigil and firing of the enemy. However, I

ensured that I spoke to each and every man deployed in forward posts. I have set up a small speaker system in each outpost, and gotten it connected with the telephone line. I ensured that I addressed all men atleast once in three days. I used to listen to their issues, stories and ideas. I used to organize small competitions like speaking, writing, reciting poetry, singing, etc., wherein all posts were on listening mode. Eachday brought a new learning. Each day was full of activity. Each day was filled with surprises. Each and every man used to wait for the next day with great zeal.

As someonesaid, "It is during trying times that one needs to dig in his heels deep and stand up to fight." This happens almost always with us in the armed forces. Deployed in far-flung places with an absolute void in communication, and no one except the enemy visible in the proximity, we manage ourselves and our morale impeccably. A leader always keeps the troops effectively motivated inspite of the isolation and the distances of separation.

Our present-day scenario reflects, more or less, the situation I have described here. The world is grappling with severe lockdowns due to Covid-19. People confined to their houses. Uncertainty everywhere. Unknown enemy at the gates. No movement. No personal interaction. So, how do we cope with this? How do we reach out to people and boost their morale?

The meteoric advent of technology in our lives has made it so very possible to reach out to anyone, anywhere, at any time without the necessity of meeting them physically. Social media, YouTube, podcasts and LinkedIn are a few such channels which aid us in keeping in constant touch with our desired circle or clientele. With

a simple shift of one's operations to the online mode, one can efficiently propagate their message. I too have been successful in reaching out and conveying my message in these turbulent times.

Tough times do not last, but tough people do. "I will come again to conquer you, because, as a mountain, you cannot grow. But as a human, I can," said Sir Edmund Hillary. It is a fact that our world and our lives are constantly interlaced with problems. Nobody promised us an easy life.

Problems keep us on our toes. Problems make the journey of life interesting. They provide us with a chance to grow. They keep us focused on our chosen goal. Problems, in a way, are our teachers.

Staying focused and confident boosts our productivity for the day. Keeping calm, constantly learning and staying connected through technology will show us the way to victory over many unknown enemies such as the coronavirus.

Stay strong, keep going. Wipe out distances with technology. Remember, success and support are just a click away.



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FINDING OPPORTUNITY AMIDST THE BIGGEST SETBACK OF OUR GENERATION

12

COVID-19 has brought everyone's movements to a sudden halt in 2020. But there is no way it can stop us from living and thriving as professionals. That's what speakers are known for. However, before we inspire others to take action, we need to inspire ourselves and take action in this disruptive time.

After the initial jitters, when I brought myself to the setback leadership mindset, I realized that this situation is actually an opportunity of a lifetime! I know you'll be surprised hearing this, but that's exactly how I saw things. And I quickly shifted gears towards that opportunity.

On the professional and personal fronts, in my relationships and spirituality, I realized my life is undergoing a sea change. I wanted to take full advantage of this situation so that when all this ends, I will emerge stronger, sharper and smarter.

As I write this piece, I'm already 15 days into self-quarantine, and India's official lockdown has moved into its second week.

Life has slowed down. None of us is in a hurry to wake up at a specific time in the morning, get ready quickly to go to office or to send kids to school. There is no noise of vehicles, either— and no worry about when the maid or the cook will arrive.

At the same time, life has become busier than ever. All the offline speaking engagements have either got postponed or cancelled in the blink of an eye. But this has freed up a lot of time to do things that matter even more. I am making full use of this undivided, unadulterated and unhurried time to grow my professional speaking brand in the following ways:

1. Focusing on creating online content

I am focusing on creating an evergreen online course based on my work. A bunch of us professional speakers from India have formed a group called "Online Course Launch Team". We are taking focused action towards creating our respective courses. We started meeting once a week to discuss progress. Having a deadline helped us build an online course quickly, paying out most attention.

2. Becoming comfortable with the uncomfortable

I've been struggling to create video content, thanks to my inhibitions and self-doubt. But this lockdown has allowed me to let go of all my excuses. I've started an everyday "HOW TO" series of videos, in which I talk about how to thrive during this challenging period.

3. Thinking future - virtual or digital summits and podcasts

Though I've never shied away from any form of speaking, I would consciously look for offline speaking, earlier. But once the quarantine started, I quickly shifted my focus to deliberately looking for online summits to speak at. And guess what? I ended up getting them. As I write this piece, I've already been interviewed for a podcast and a book review. I'm scheduled to speak at two more virtual summits and a video interview next week.

4. Tightening the loose ends

We all have loose ends that need tightening. I have them, too. For example, my website needs to be updated. A few things about it weren't working well, which was bringing down my brand value. I'm concentrating on fixing these. This is part of my process of sharpening my axe and preparing for the big chop!

5. Bringing back relevant courses for my audience

Fortunately, my core speaking topic is "Setback Leadership". And now, it has become ever so important to learn the techniques of turning challenges into opportunities of a lifetime. As an advocate of this concept, it's apparent that I would be bringing out content that is apt for this situation. I want to help people sail through this challenging time smoothly, and enable them to find opportunities amidst the chaos.

6. Learning new skills and building trusted connections worldwide

I'm also investing my time heavily in learning new skills, whether it is getting better at making videos or how to sell right. Apart from that, I am building trustworthy professional relationships with other speakers, meeting planners, speaker bureaus and speaker agents around the world. I genuinely believe that to become a global speaker, you must have global connections who will vouch for you. And I am consciously building those connections.

I've made a few lifestyle changes too, and made pacts with my family so that all of us can have the most comfortable time at home.

1. Being physically and mentally fit

I have added sunbathing and exercising to my daily routine. For the past month, I've been sunbathing and exercising for 30 minutes every morning. I meditate while I sunbathe, thereby grounding myself and setting the mood for the whole day.

2. Dividing time between household chores and work

This is a pact I have made with my family. Each one of us is supposed to take some time out of our daily work/study schedules for household chores. If you look at my calendar right now, you'll see a separate time blocked for all household chores. This helps me plan my day, seeking help from my family. Also, this reduces friction between us family members. Everyone is happy contributing to the mundane household tasks.

3. Spending quality time with my family

While my daughter is getting bugged with this lockdown, we make sure that we spend quality time with her - often playing board games or card games. We're also catching up on movies together, on Netflix or Prime. We organized a virtual birthday party for our daughter, as she wasn't able to celebrate her birthday with her friends, this time.

I know for sure that when this crisis ends, I'll come out a more evolved person. I would have worked on products and services that will help me way beyond the current situation. I'm looking forward to a significantly revamped future!



SrijataBhatnagar is an international professional speaker and the author of the book "Setback Leadership". She loves speaking using engaging real-life stories, amusing incidents, self-deprecating humour, personal experiences and painful setbacks.

Her expertise lies in guiding businesses and individuals to rise beyond their challenges, fears and limiting beliefs to achieve holistic success. She is the Membership Chair of the Professional Speakers Association India.

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Should you be keen to read her blogs or check out details about her various initiatives and work appearances, you can visit her website: <https://www.srijatabhatnagar.com/>

WHAT LIES ARE YOU TELLING YOURSELF?

In February 2018, when frustration started hitting me hard at my day job, I wanted to pursue something that I'd love doing.

And make money from it.

I had no idea how to start earning on the side of my day job as a Research Scientist at a pharmaceutical company, and eventually, turn the side-job into my fulltime job. I had started my podcast "The Inspiring Talk" just six months ago.

Every time I interviewed successful individuals for my podcast, I'd ask myself what I was doing with my life. Why not quit my job, and follow my passion for podcasting and help others do the same? I lived with these thoughts for a few months.

One Sunday, I was asked to be at office, and work on an important project. You know how every project becomes "important" at corporates. That day, my frustration with my job reached its peak.

After I came back home, without having any firm plan, I drafted a WhatsApp message offering a six-week online coaching program on podcasting. I then circulated it to the groups I was part of. Within 24 hours, I had 10 paid participants, thereby earning me a decent revenue.

I continued doing these online coaching programs to ensure that there was enough validation for my new-

found business idea. After my third successful batch, I quit my job.

The growing interest, coupled with great participant response and a fascination for the space of coaching, mentoring and podcasting spurred me on. This, in turn, turned the wheel of opportunities towards offlineworkshops, training and consulting.

By February 2020, I had completed ten such coaching batches and a few offline workshops, but it was taking a lot of my time. It's not that I hadn't thought of or planned to take my program online, but I barely had the motivation to act on it. The sticky note on my wall, with action items written on them, had gathered a fair amount of dust in the past year.

I had more excuses to make up, as we had started a new podcast production company, WYN Studio, a few months previously. My focus was shifting from coaching to building the company and taking it to the next level.

In early March 2020, we got new office space. I started working from there, and kick-started several new projects for WYN Studio. I was very excited at the prospect of rolling these out in the beginning of April 2020. We had worked for a while on each of these projects, and couldn't wait for the world to see what we had been cooking.

ENTER CORONAVIRUS.

I stopped going to office and locked myself up at home, amidst all the chaos. By the middle of March, all our projects were halted.

Also, I slowed down my coaching and consulting assignments. I had no idea how I was going to sustain after the pandemic, with no visible sign of an income.

It has now been three days since I stopped going to office. I have been trying to keep myself busy by following up with some clients and working on some pending tasks. On the evening of 18th March, Jogesh, a friend of mine, called me to check if I was safe. During our conversation, he asked me about my progress with the online podcasting course.

Jogesh and I had planned our respective online podcasting courses together in 2019. But now, while his course had 5000 students in over 128 countries, my course was still on my sticky note. After listening to my excuses, he challenged me to launch my course on 31 March 2020, and to post the launch date in advance on my Facebook wall.

I resisted, since 31st March was just 12 days away. But Jogesh wouldn't take any excuses.

"Screw it, let's do it!" I shouted over the phone.

I made a Facebook post announcing the launch and asked who'd be interested if I did an online course. I held myself accountable to the 85 people who "liked" my post and the 30 people who commented on it, even though I had never recorded or created an online course until then.

The next day, I created a very broad outline for the program and made 3D mock-ups of the courses. I also created an online store on Instamojo, with details of the course. Then, I replied to every single comment on Facebook, asking the person who had commented if they would be interested in making a pre-order at highly discounted price.

I started getting sign-ups.

ENTER MONEY.

The biggest accountability you can have in your life is the accountability of having someone's money in your bank for the product you are yet to create.

I could see the clock ticking. 10 days left. It was a strange mix of excitement and stress.

The excitement of Instamojo notifications of payments. And the stress of delivering what I had promised.

Fast-forward to 30 March, 2020. Over 100 people have signed up for the program, bringing in over Rs. 1 lakh in revenue. All from organic reach and word-of-mouth.

My course is all set to go "live". I have learnt all the systems and tools required to automate the entire process. I have also documented the process of building the course, which, in turn, will become a separate course.

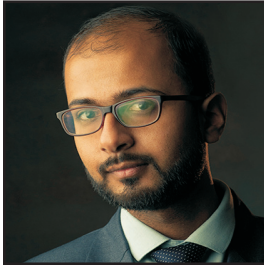
It seemed impossible to launch a course in 12 days, with all automation and systems. It became possible because of the accountability of people's money, friends like Jogesh and a desperate need to pivot. I invested a little over a week on pivoting from my coaching to my online podcasting course, but this is going to generate passive income for the rest of my life.

There are no better times than testing times to work on creating multiple income streams. I can't stress enough on finding an accountability partner who challenges you to push through your boundaries. In turn, you should be prepared to do the same for them. If you have someone who has already walked the path, it will serve two purposes – one, that of an accountability partner and two, that of a mentor.

70 What lies are you Telling Yourself?

This entire experience has made me realize the lies I was telling myself the entire past year, and how everything fell in place when I committed to kick-start the project.

What lies are you telling yourself?



Bijay Gautam is the Co-founder of WYN Studio, a creative content studio specializing in audio storytelling. Also, he is the host of The Inspiring Talk podcast, a finalist at the Asia's Best Podcast Award. He is a sought-after podcast coach and mentor who has inspired hundreds of people to

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Bijay has been featured in national publications like The Hindu, The Ken and The Sunday Guardian Live.

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WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS...

2020 was to be our turnaround year. The year we would finally make a profit. And here I was, thinking of which of my staff to lay off.

Five years ago, we left the city, sick of its stress and tension. A family of four, we moved to a tiny Himalayan village. It was calm and beautiful, but earning a living was a challenge. I had quit my job and sold my house. Consulting was my sole income –and gradually, that dried up. Things looked bleak. No job. And no prospects. At 45, my career was dead.

I tried various things. Designing motorcycle tours. Teaching at a business school. I am a published author, and I love to teach. One idea was to offer a two-day residential workshop for aspiring writers. We called it the “Himalayan Writing Retreat”. The participants loved the workshop. In 2017, we did a few more such workshops at rented bungalows and local resorts. The positive feedback continued, and gave us confidence – so we added topics like blogging & storytelling. My Co-founder & wife, Dr Vandita Dubey, is a clinical psychologist and a published author. She created her own workshop on “Emotional Well-being Through Writing”. It was a hit!

However, every workshop was not a runaway success. Some bombed, with zero sign-ups, and were quietly removed from the website. But we learnt from each failure.

In 2019, we held some 20 events – writing workshops, kids’ workshops, master classes. For one such event, nine writers flew in from the US for 10 days. By now, we had built a small six-room boutique hotel. The Himalayan Writing Retreat now had an address. We had a staff of six to cater to our visitors. Our 5-on-5 ratings continued on Google and Facebook. It was great to see an idea become such a well-loved reality. We also started supporting a local school and an NGO that works on climate change. We finally felt that our decision to leave the city had worked out. We had our own business. We loved our work, found meaning in it, and loved the fact that people found value in what we offered.

In 2019, we hosted workshops through December, January and February – very cold months in the Himalayas, with sub-zero temperatures. Yet, participants turned up in good numbers. The Himalayan Writing Retreat had become a brand! Our calendar from April 2020 was very busy. We had announced brand new products like a poetry master class and a teen writing workshop, along with many of our long-standing offerings. I was looking forward to 2020 as the year when all our investment and hard work would pay off.

Then, disaster struck.

Because of the corona virus scare, we had to cancel several events. Staff salaries, kids’ school fees and other costs continued, but all revenue stopped. Instead of getting money in, we were giving people refunds. The dream year had turned into a nightmare. Summer was our peak season. But this year, that was set to be a washout. And it wasn’t very clear when things would get better.

Vandita and I went for long walks through green forests, as the corona virus scare grew. These walks were a great time to chat and ideate. We discussed going online. In the past, people had often asked us to offer online courses. But we didn't like the idea. We thought our product experience would be incomplete without the mountains.

But now, we realized that a lockdown was actually a good time to pitch an online course. People were free, bored and looking for a meaningful pursuit. Our previous participants insisted that the learning by itself - sans the hospitality & Himalayan beauty - had immense value. We had already started a free "writers meet-up", just to get writers focused and motivated. This initiative got a great response, but it didn't help us financially.

Tentatively, I put together the skeleton of an online writing workshop which we could sell. Conventional online learning mostly means watching videos of experts – a one-way flow, with little communication and feedback. I didn't like that "more TV" model of learning. Instead, I modelled the online workshop on our offline Himalayan workshops. I imagined online learning as a small-group experience, where the communication was two-way. No more than ten participants, we would chat, exchange ideas, write a lot and get rich feedback. I bought a Zoom subscription.

On the 24th of March this year, the PM announced a 21-day lockdown. And on the 25th, we announced two "Lockdown Writing Workshops". We priced the online courses at half the price of their offline versions. The courses had to take place during the lockdown; so we got very little time to market them. We got six sign-ups for the

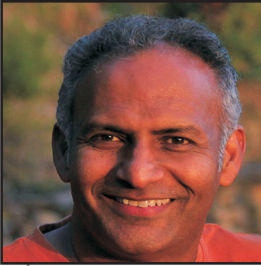
first workshop (conducted from April 3 to 5). The second Lockdown Workshop (from 10 to 12 April) was sold out, with ten participants. Vandita offered her “Emotional Well-being Through Writing” workshop online, as well. Again, it was a hit.

We learnt a lot from this effort. Apart from India, we got participants from Singapore and one from Chicago. We realized that with physical travel gone, we could sell to a much bigger market. Many who cannot travel or afford the Himalayan courses signed up for the online courses. Online keeps us relevant to and engaged with many more people who want to learn. We realized that these online workshops won’t just help us through this pandemic. These are great even for normal times.

We’re earning less, but we’re breaking even. We haven’t laid off any of our staff. One team member – who could afford to do so– has gone on leave without pay for a few months. But we hope to have him back, soon.

We realize we’re lucky to have built a good brand for a service which can be offered remotely. The pandemic was a challenge. But we enjoyed making something good out of this setback, too.

As they say, when life gives you lemons, make lemonade.



Chetan Mahajan is a writing coach & the author of "The Bad Boys of Bokaro Jail" (Penguin, 2014). His TEDx talk on getting laid off has garnered over 40,000 views. This Kellogg MBA quit his urban career (last role: CEO of HCL Learning Ltd.) for a simple life in the Himalayas.

Along with his wife, he founded the Himalayan Writing Retreat. He writes frequently for www.livemint.com, Hindu Business Line and Readers Digest.

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EVERYTHING IS CHANGING, WHILE NOTHING HAS

Last October, I was taking pride in telling my circle of friends, especially at social gatherings, that I had retired before I turned 40. Little did I know then that I was starting a new chapter in my professional life. Five months after “announcing” my early superannuation, here I am, embarking on a new professional journey in a world where everything is changing while nothing has changed. Here is the story of how my team and I evolved rapidly, with one element being at the forefront.

I run a unique social enterprise which connects people with careers, people with knowledge, and people with other people. We are a nine-member dynamo team spread over two cities, pumping out the work of thirty people. This is not an exaggeration! We have one member in the western suburbs of Mumbai, who operates from home and drives an annual awards programme. Two team members in the central suburbs of Mumbai ensure that twenty youngsters, hailing from different parts of India, receive the best Public Relations education through a robust and comprehensive ten-month course run by a one-of-its-kind PR school. This course culminates in a guaranteed job with a leading PR firm.

The six of us working in Gurgaon are an interesting mix. One travels from Bhatinda, Punjab every week, while the others live in Gurgaon. Of these six members, two run a quarterly print magazine and manage an online portal which hosts 30 pieces of fresh content per week

(this content is packed into a newsletter and circulated). In addition, they engage the community through half a dozen annual listicles which celebrate myriad professionals. Two others manage new product offerings on the web. The remaining two work on our offline events, which include our flagship PRAXIS, the largest annual residential gathering of PR professionals, and five other cutting-edge events.

Given the complexity of our work, a seamless transition to working as a predominantly online enterprise may seem unimaginable. And yet, we did it - like a fish taking to water. Within hours of switching to a fully work-from-home mode, we on-boarded a plethora of online platforms in the form of weekly conclaves. Also, we set-up a learn-from-home model for our students (who managed to return to their homes in the nick of time). Quickly adapting to the changing dynamics ensured that we did not lose precious time.

But where do we go from here? How do we scale up for the future? And more importantly, how did we do all this in a week? Herein lie some of the answers.

When a business is built upon a strong foundation embedded in the value system of integrity, one can seldom falter. And we have done just that. As a conference organizer, we have done some of the most unique things over the years, that have held us in good stead. For instance, at PRAXIS, we have ensured that none of our speakers was repeated across the eight editions held so far. We have had a fresh set of speakers every year. Also, nearly 200 professionals have got an opportunity to share their insights on stage.

However, in just one fell swoop, all of this can change. In such a situation, what can save us is our credibility,

which can't be built overnight. Credibility is a collection of many things over many years. The three essentials of being credible are (in my opinion) - to be authentic, to be grounded and to be passionate. This is a narrative of how credibility can help when the going gets tough.

Through this paragraph, I want to offer you the shortest crash course in understanding credibility, since I am in the business of helping reputation managers have a formidable reputation themselves. The House of Public Relations, that we created last year based on many months of insight-gathering, helps us understand this better through its 23 concepts. Ultimately, everyone seeks credibility. And credibility stands on the pillars of goodwill, respect, engagement, affinity and trust. At the base are the three Cs that are critical for a robust PR framework – Communication, Campaigns and Common Sense. These, in turn, are the foundation on which Great Content, Brilliant Connects, Excellent Crisis Planning and Solid Counsel rest. The next layer is of the art of storytelling. The science of strategic planning is key, too. A circle of influence, the intent to create impact, and innovation are at the heart of what we set out to do. These were supported with deep research, the ability to measure outcomes, and a strong penchant for ethics. These are the quintessential building blocks of credibility that can help bring about change without affecting the normal course of life.

Using this credibility, that has been built over a period of time, we are making the most of this lockdown. First, we launched a new series of online learning courses. Next, we are piloting another bunch of offerings that will benefit the Communication profession- an online career support platform, a new products discovery portal, a virtual guild of the leading communication leaders, and a network of

experts that will be available to organizations. These are being on-boarded swiftly. Until a few weeks ago, these were just thoughts. But now, they have metamorphosed into revenue-generating tracks.

We have very little know-how of the online world. Still, as the road to recovery is likely to be long, we at The Promise Foundation are confident that we are in a good space, heading towards a bright future. We acted decisively, made tough choices mindfully, and planned for a timely retirement from the offline world. We have thus been able to start afresh.

The world will get more and more chaotic. Volatility will be the order of the day. Uncertainty is here to stay. Ambiguity will be part of our life. But, if we can lead from the front, using simple steps to be credible, we can be fairly confident that when one door closes many others will open.



Amith Prabhu is a pioneering Public Relations and Reputation Management professional with over 15 years of experience, having worked with leading marketing communication companies in India and the USA. He is the co-founder of India's only weekend offsite summit for the profession – PRAXIS. This is held under the aegis of The PRomise Foundation, which is a member of the Global Alliance (GA). Amith is on the international board of GA. He is also a columnist and the Founding Dean of the School of Communications & Reputation (SCoRe) in Mumbai. He has a Master's in Public Relations and Communication Management from Symbiosis Institute of Media & Communication, Pune. He can be reached at @amithpr on Twitter and at bit.ly/amithprabhu on LinkedIn.

PEOPLE ALWAYS NEED THINGS. YOU JUST HAVE TO BE THERE

Whatsapp has unveiled to the world, a number of positives and negatives of the Covid-19 crisis. The positives – which I prefer to focus upon – are about gratitude for pointing us in the direction of renewal of human consciousness. About forcing us to relook at established habit patterns – and possibly renouncing those patterns forever. By leading a minimalistic life. Caring about fellow beings. And appreciating the interconnectedness of everything.

This connectedness is the central construct of my definition of Energy. Energy is an “agent enabling connections”. People, places, objects, other beings and even thoughts connect with us when we perceive their energy. And when we do perceive their energy, we can attract, repel or stay neutral. The energy of panic, with which the corona virus enveloped the world, has led many of us to believe in a scarcity of time, money or options.

I am here to tell you that there are always options.

When I returned to India in the last week of February this year, my passport had the stamps of six countries in the previous five months. I did not know that my entire world as an international speaker and workshop conductor would be coming to a grinding halt in the next month. What I did know is that my energy would connect compassionately with whatever my audiences needed. And people always need things. You just have to be there.

It did not call for any research to decide that people would need to learn how to fortify their immunity. For that, I had solutions using Qigong principles. Immediately, I put out notices on Facebook, LinkedIn, my email list and Whatsapp that 30-minute sessions were available, free of cost. Everyday, I found a group that could be collectively taught over Zoom. Their blessings, a silent benevolent energy exchange, reinforced my own protective energy field.

Conversations over these sessions made me understand that declining financial reserves were stressing many people out. And so, I started making videos about managing stress and anxiety, and publishing them on YouTube. As I write this, I'm working on a 4-week plan to enable people to set up online business options, doing what they love.

The third thing I realized was that the time had come to do the finishing edits on my book, which quite aptly is about raising human consciousness through small changes in individual habits. The tagline of the book is "Your unexpected role in saving the planet". There are no coincidences. It was universal energy that had got me started on this idea pre-Covid, and made the world more pliable (I imagine) to receive this message.

So, that was about me. What is it that you can do? Here are 5-steps.

How to unlock your energy and benefit from the crisis

First, shrug off the contaminative energy of hopelessness, and shut your television and newspaper. Give that time over to reading books like this one. Listen

to talks that educate you and sow in your mind the seeds of positivity and action. Trust me, YouTube has a lot of this stuff.

Second, identify what you enjoy doing (like I enjoy Energy work), and put together videos, audios or articles that allow your knowledge to become available to others. Share it on Quora, YouTube and social media, and invite responses. Based on the feedback, learn more, to deepen your hold on the subject. Explore what people would be willing to pay money for. For example, while my immunity-building sessions are free, several CEOs want their teams to return healthier and more productive, post-Covid. They have understood that Qigong courses over Zoom will help them achieve that. So, what would people be happy to pay you for?

Third, involve your family. Since this time presents a unique opportunity to bond as a family unit, use it to share your dreams with them. See what makes everyone's heart happy, and drive energies in that direction to set up your private business. It could be gardening, sewing, writing, cooking, photography, dance, absolutely anything. What you love, other people like or need, too. And when you put your energy into it, they will be drawn by that connection.

Fourth, set up a formal online presence. You could own a podcast channel, a blog, a course, a vlog or any other system that you can direct people to. As I mentioned, this is consuming the next four weeks of mine; so you can follow my footsteps if you would like to connect with me.

And finally, post-Covid, maintain your priorities. Once priorities are clear, decisions are easy. My recommendation, which is becoming the default for most

people under the pressure of working from home, is of having priorities in the following order:

1. Your connection with divine energy.
2. Your family and home affairs.
3. Your business and self-growth.
4. Your job/current source of income.
5. Your social and other engagements.

With this outline, you will always feel secure and will never be faced with challenges like, “Shall I read the next chapter?” (priority #3) or “Shall I check my Whatsapp?”(priority #5).

Enjoy the journey of life!



Sandeep Nath is enabling CEOs to increase team productivity, reduce stress and demolish uncertainty during the Covid-19 crisis. He is an Inner Power coach and a professional speaker, and has authored the book “Arrive at Success”. As a master of Energy, Business Qigong and

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MINDFULNESS AS A TOOL TO FACE A CRISIS

Covid-19

People dying

Quarantine

Lockdown

Schools closed

Business losses

Workshops cancelled

Phew! These were the words I was hearing since mid-March. It was scary, worrisome, painful. And more than anything, it was something I was not prepared for at all.

I had great plans for the coming financial year, 2020-21. I had launched my wellness subscription box "Life fulness Box" for women on the 8th of March. I always wanted to modify coaching and give it a twist, and this box was my experiment. It was a huge hit among many, and we were beginning to get subscriptions.

My hope, that this year we will be financially better off, shattered like a dropped glass due to this pandemic. I was struggling to talk to anyone about how I was feeling, because everyone was going through their share of problems.

One conversation with a few friends who were panicking turned out to be very negative. It set off a shrill

alarm within me. This is when I felt the real need to look inward, and think differently and positively. I shared my first post on LinkedIn on how to stay safe during this period: at the level of our body, mind and self. Even as it gave hope to many people who read it, this post gave me hope, as well. In between all the negative messages, hope was something everyone was looking for. My post encouraged me to bring a fresh perspective to my business and life. I started looking at what I could do now, which is in my control.

In our plan for 2020, moving online was one of the key goals. I started seeing what I could do about that during this time. My key intention was to make more people from outside my circle aware of my company “Green Minds”, and to have a mix of people from across India in this set.

I therefore launched a free series called “21 days of Mindfulness” much before the actual 21-day lockdown started. I received a great response, with more than 150 people joining the program. This was the second boost to my morale. The story continues. I am now running a program for kids called “Reflective Journaling”, in which more than 350 kids from across the globe are participating. By the time it ends, I would have achieved my goal of spreading awareness about us and our programs.

While revenue generation during this time is still a big question mark (since these are free programs), I have gained 500 followers for the business organically. This is a phenomenal outcome; getting followers of this kind means good business in the future. Also, I received requests from corporate for hosting mindfulness programs for their employees. By now, I have had more than 600 attendees for these programs, too.

Mindfulness has been the anchor element in the way I have been handling this situation. It has helped me notice what is going on within me, and to respond with awareness. Living in the moment without judgement can bring about productive thinking without worrying about the future. By focusing only on what we can do now, we also gain clarity. These have been my learnings from the past one month:

- ☐ *Understand change as a constant and adapt quickly.*
- ☐ *Work on things which are in your control.*
- ☐ *Use your intuition to work through all times, and you will surely benefit.*
- ☐ *Apply the law of giving, because that will create a pattern of receiving.*
- ☐ *There is abundance around us. Right now, we have an abundance of time; so, use it wisely.*
- ☐ *Resilience is required - embrace it.*
- ☐ *Be available when the world needs you. When all this dies down, people will still remember you for what you gave them during their most difficult times.*

Nothing - good or bad - is permanent. Impermanence is what makes this life very interesting. This is an opportunity to reinvent. And it will be totally worth it.



Abirambika Ravivarman is a coach, facilitator, professional speaker and Mindfulness practitioner. She strongly believes that every individual has immense power which, if tapped in the right way, can take them to great heights. She has had rich corporate experience which has helped her

shape herself professionally.

As a coach, she has been able to go through an interesting personal transformational journey. She sees the positive impact of this journey on her life, and that motivates her to take her message to as many people as possible.

If you are looking to step up your life or help your employees enhance themselves, reach out to Abirambika at abi@greenminds.in, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/abirambika/>, www.greenminds.in or www.abirambika.com

SHIFTING GEARS in ROUGH WATERS

It was out of passion that I had chosen photography as a career. Tinkering with a passion meant learning by experimenting, and I was doing many types of photography - a slave to my curiosity. In a span of 4 years, I had reached a point where I needed to be known for one particular genre in photography, for business reasons. I chose Business Portraits.

Success in the field brought its own set of commitments. Now, I had an office and monthly pay-outs to be made. My passion for the art fought for space in the day-to-day rigmarole of running a business. Success meant having clients walk in for portraits, every day. A gradual growth, partly from client requests and partly because of my passionate eye behind the lens, moved me from doing portraits alone. "Business portraits - is this what you want to do for the rest of your life?" the entrepreneur in me threw a question on my face.

Though we were handling video projects as well, I now had to draw a clear distinction and bring clarity to what we should do as a brand. What should we be known for?

We decided to be a video production house. We were already equipped to be a production house and were doing such projects too, but we weren't projecting ourselves that way.

We now began working on video projects with focus, and things started falling in place. We worked on TV commercials for well-known educational institutions and video graphed big events for national institutions. We helped professional speakers build their thought leadership by making their portraits and videos, and managing their YouTube channels.

Our name spread. We started receiving queries for video marketing, along with video production. The market was asking us to be a video production and video marketing company.

But then, Covid-19 came along. And the lockdown meant no shoots.

A client knows that they have to make videos to build their brand. What they don't know is what type of videos are to be made for the goal they have in mind. There are around 12 types of videos, overall. We, as a company, provide the entire suite of services from concept generation to production to distribution of videos.

We were like the barren land that had been tilled and made ready for a crop, when work was suddenly stalled. So, we decided to sow our seeds: prime our clients, show them the importance of making videos, teach them how to make videos, and help our existing clientele improve their videos.

In these Covid-19 days, we also wrote long-form articles for our prospects; this is the best use we could put our leisure time to, for different industries. We wrote articles for thought leaders, encouraging them to create online video courses. We wrote on how educational institutions can position themselves, and how real estate

companies can market themselves better. During our groundwork, we found interesting insights about these industries and shared them, too.

For instance, the market for online video courses remains untapped by thought leaders. For professional speakers, it is necessary to be thought leaders in their chosen domain to not only get more speaking gigs, but also build a sustainable business when speaking gigs are fewer. Online video courses help them package their knowledge, hard work and research for the benefit of the market. These courses can become a separate income stream.

We therefore created content to empower speakers, trainers, consultants and other independent professionals to leverage their knowledge during this lockdown.

As everything goes virtual/online due to Covid-19, the market for online video courses will be valued more than before.

Learning from our experience, you too can do the following:

- ☐ *Sow the seeds of your tomorrow.*
- ☐ *Empower your potential clients to choose you.*
- ☐ *Help people; don't sell now.*
- ☐ *Look for new avenues of opportunities and income.*

The season of failure is the best time for sowing the seeds of success. – Paramahansa Yogananda



Navanee Viswa is the Founder of Studio Navans, a video marketing agency which helps organizations, entrepreneurs, marketing teams and individuals develop video marketing strategies. The company also offers end-to-end production to help clients in brand-building and business growth.

His holistic video production and distribution approach - using customer insights and linking them to marketing metrics - has helped businesses accomplish their goals effectively.

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First, there was 9/11. Then came the financial crisis of 2008. And now, the advent of Covid-19 is proving cataclysmic: upsetting lives, constantly increasing death tolls and disrupting swathes of vertical markets, creating a terrible domino effect. The nature of this beast has affected the world economy and our clients, which in turn, will affect us - the keynote speakers, consultants and coaches. However, this adversity should give us time to reflect, dig deep and bring forth qualities of resilience and flexibility.

My thesis is that there is always a tomorrow, there is hope, and that peaks and valleys are a part of life. Stories best illustrate setbacks and the attitude of the characters that brings positivity. They symbolize the rise of the phoenix from the ashes.

Story 1: The alcoholic

Texas, the lone star state, is a metaphor for independent thinking, proud cowboys, multihued and multicultural Houstonians, Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, College Station, and long stretches of dusty highways and massive ranches. Cowboy Cadillacs, a metaphor for ornate pick-up trucks, the big three SUVs, and German and Japanese cars were a transportation staple for car-crazy Texans - spawning muffler, radiator, tire and auto repair shops across the counties.

Dallas - Fort Worth, a large geographic and commercial hub in North Texas is the focus of our attention; particularly, a medium-sized auto remanufacturing business with an annual sales of USD 50 million.

It was a 20,000 sq. ft. facility, with a large inventory bay for storage, and a manufacturing facility for stripping select used auto parts which were to be cleaned, refurbished and sent to stock. It had a fleet of half-ton trucks that replenished and sold spare parts to jobber shops. It was staffed by a President, VP Sales, an Office Manager, Accounts Receivable & Payable Clerks, Admin. Assistants and a Stock Room Manager

Typical of such a situation, an external consultant mandated by the holding company in Mountain Home-Arkansas, some 750 miles northeast, was held in fear and loathing. Everybody walked on eggshells around him, and spoke highly of their work ethic, dedication and long hours. As that hapless individual, I was tasked with conducting a minute and clean sweep to determine the money trail, all inflows, outflows, working patterns, duplication of effort, inefficiencies, delays and customer responses. It was a daunting task, with a lot of prevarication from the workforce who were stalling my questions with downright pugnacity.

The solution revealed itself from an unlikely source: the point man, a go-to person; someone who everyone relied on. The real leader, not the highly-paid ostensible one, the President who was affable, social and clueless about the daily operations. He (the President) was there because he was a brother in-law of one of the directors of the company, and was a figurehead. By now, I had gone over the system with a fine-toothed comb, and had identified several issues that needed to be addressed.

The point man had an excellent solution. He was the high-functioning alcoholic septuagenarian Shipping and Receiving Clerk at the cubicle in the loading area. With an eagle eye, he observed everything, and knew precisely what was wrong with the organization. He had a rubber hot-water bottle with a straw strapped to his chest and hidden behind his vest. It was filled with bourbon and water. Asip now and then kept him calm; thereby, he didn't get the shakes. I took him out for a drink, and after spending three hours with him, I had a clear idea on what was wrong with the organization. I was surprised to find this from such an unlikely source!

I had the President and VP-Sales terminated immediately, streamlined the truck routing thereby removing redundant trips, removed a lot of items that had fewer inventory rotations, provided cash incentives for quick payments, reworked favourable terms with suppliers, improved the manufacturing processes, and improved the efficiency of the system, thereby saving time and effort.

I also had new replacements from the industry hired and trained, and hey presto! We started making money, and were in the black. A humble shipping clerk turned the company around on a dime: a true pivot. What did the old fella want? Nothing, other than to be left alone in peace in his cubicle. I made sure he was recognized and given scholarship money for his grandkids - something he could not drink away.

A situation that was daunting, hopeless and filled with apathy turned into joy, celebration and enthusiasm. So, never say die: just stare at a problem, and you will see the light. As we all will now, during this lull.

The second tale is more reflective of change, and somewhat similar to the times we are facing; a different approach to doing business, learning new skillsets, and being faced with a horrendous and sudden adversity like the one we are in the midst of, now. The lesson being, that a positive attitude and guarded optimism can carry us through, again.

Story 2: Reinventing myself

The last century witnessed a paradigm shift into the digital age. My engineering was done using slide rules. I really date myself by this confession. I spent two decades in conventional engineering, and picked up selling skills, selling high-value engineered capital equipment. We graduated from tele-printers, fax machines, dictaphones, word processing and inefficient gas-guzzling behemoths to modern life as we know it today. The rate of obsolescence was alarming; the Walkman, VHS, CD and pagers are all testimony to this. While doing my MBA, I had to go to a computer lab to have my assignments Word-processed, struggle through creating spreadsheets, and create powerless and pointless PPT presentations. The sheltering darkness during the presentation was a safe place to slumber in, while the presenter droned on.

Two and a half decades later, I was surrounded by bright-eyed and bushy-tailed desis in the US, marching around with their backpacks, speaking Telugu, Punjabi, Tapani and Tamil. I was obsolete and out of step. Object-oriented programming, software, etc. were strange buzzwords to this engineer from the internal combustion era. Get assimilated or perish, I thought to myself. So I took a sabbatical in 2000, the Y2K year. "Why not join the stereotype and become an IT Indian?" I asked myself.

I spent a year learning Visual Basic, Java, Relational Databases, GUI creation and how to use SQL statements. I learnt various back-end processes, how to write script in HTML, how to create websites with hyperlinks, etc. On September 11, 2001, I remember doing a joint development with our open laptops, huddled as a team, struggling with younger folk, when you know the rest. We watched with horror as the planes struck the towers. Our job offers evaporated, very much like during the Covid-19 catastrophe now. We were in a dazed limbo. Curiously, this additional qualification, coupled with engineering, sales and management consulting, positioned me better to handle project and program management work. My decision to enter the IT field paid off. I was in a trough - down but not broken. I rose again and soared.

Story 3: There is life post-Covid

Reinvention time again! I'm an established keynote speaker abroad, but the time has come to enter the vortex of uncertainty and leverage my skills in India. So recently, I founded a company called Vortex Solutions to provide key advice to senior and middle management in communication, cross-cultural issues and different approaches in the post-Covid age.

Enter Professional Speakers Association of India (PSAI). I'm a newbie, and in isolation. I could complain and lose hope. But it became apparent in the PSAI boot camps that I could enter a fast-paced, dynamic virtual world and perhaps, enter the events scene, too. Nevertheless, I will probably be slower than others to assimilate this change. The camaraderie and hope for a better tomorrow are infectious. It behooves us to catch this wind in our sails and plough through.

Yes. I know I shall slay this dragon too, and be third time lucky.



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ENGINEERING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In 2001, I took on a new assignment as Branch Manager of one of the biggest branches of a leading new-generation private sector bank. The branch had been through a tough period. Multiple management changes in the previous year. Three consecutive 'Unsatisfactory' internal audit reports. And the icing on the cake: a theft of INR 5 lakhs in cash. Remember, it was 2001; five lakhs rupees was a lot of money!

On my first day at this branch, after observing the branch function during business hours, I called a general meeting with all the staff. I expressed the desire to interact with each employee one-on-one over the next few days. The intention of these meetings was to get to know each other. I was hoping it would be a worthwhile investment of time. How impactful the meetings would turn out to be, only time would tell.

I opted to interact one-on-one, rather than in small groups, because past experience had showed that a few people tend to dominate group meetings, while most remained silent. On the other hand, one-on-one meetings forced each employee to talk. They were given the opportunity to express themselves freely. This way, they would feel more comfortable than when their peers or superiors were around.

As these meetings were about the employee perspective, I limited my talking to the bare essentials or to seek clarifications. At the end of each meeting, I

asked the employee of their expectations from me as their leader.

In two days, I met everyone. The insights I got in those two days were some of the most significant ones in my career. I felt I had a finger on the pulse of the employees; I knew what they desired. There was a lot of unlearning, learning and re-learning. I was amazed and appreciative of the work skills and commitment on offer in the motley team.

The major puzzle for me was this: In spite of having a bunch of skilful and committed individuals, if the branch was doing badly, was it an employee-engagement issue?

After my one-on-one meetings, I divided the branch into two groups –Tellers, and Sales cum Operations. I asked them to formulate suggestions for changes in their respective areas of work.

The Tellers came up with a fabulous suggestion. The branch timings were from 8.30 am, and we had 3 Tellers managed by a Supervisor. Being one of the biggest branches in the country, this branch had two ATMs where customers could deposit cash and cheques. About 100 such envelopes would be deposited every day. Immediately after opening the branch, two Tellers were tasked with opening these envelopes and accounting for the cash and cheques. While these two tellers were handling the envelopes, a third teller managed the walk-in traffic at the branch. Effectively, for the first hour or so, the branch was functioning with one teller. And at times, customers expressed their angst at the long wait.

So, our Tellers suggested that two of them would come at 7.30 am instead of at 8.30 am. In the first hour, they

would clear and sort out the envelopes containing cash and cheques. This worked wonderfully well, as, by the time the branch opened for business, the cash deposited in ATMs was accounted for and customer accounts, credited. Cheques deposited were sorted out and ready to go for clearing. This effectively added two extra tellers during business hours, which resulted in less crowding and more customer satisfaction with the branch. Also, the Tellers were more relaxed, as customer pressure decreased.

On my part, I gave the Tellers the freedom to leave for the day after finishing their allotted work. The Teller Supervisor had a two-year-old kid at home. This freedom, of being allowed to go home early after the work was finished, resonated the most with her. She drove her team to finish their allotted work in super-quick time.

At the same time, the Sales cum Operations team came up with their suggestion. At that time, after an account was opened, customer deliverables used to come to the branch. These were debit cards, cheque books, debit card PINs, Telephone Identification Numbers, net banking access codes, etc. All these were handled by different persons. So, account holders, after opening an account, had to come to the branch to collect their deliverables. Also, they had to shuttle between different counters to collect their account operating kit.

The Sales cum Operations team suggested that we club all this and have just one person handle it. Only the debit cards and PINs were not handled by this person - for security reasons. This arrangement worked very well, and customers were delighted that their wait time at the branch was cut down considerably. Later on, this process

was introduced as a Standard Operating Process across all the branches of the bank. It was our legacy to the bank. Later, this process was refined further, and all the deliverables started being dispatched to the customers mailing address directly.

Implementing these two suggestions saw greater engagement of staff members, resulting in better customer service and a massive rise in business. Staff members had better work-like balance, leave-taking reduced, and retention of staff increased. The branch rose to become one of the best performing branches in Operations and Sales.

The Covid-19 lockdown has put us on ‘pause’ mode, giving us time to reflect on what more can be done by engaging employees. Here are my suggestions:

- ☐ *Utilise the lockdown time to introspect on the new challenges in the post-Covid era.*
- ☐ *Proactively seek ideas from employees to create the future. The payback on this investment would be manifold.*
- ☐ *The online meetings conducted during this time can be used to connect with employees at a personal and professional level. Thereby, expectations, goals and intentions will become aligned.*
- ☐ *Engaging staff through active listening and adopting a “Staff First” approach will ensure that they deliver super-normal results.*



K.V. Premraj is an author and a professional speaker on Leadership and Management. Managing Crisis in the Employee Engagement space is his forte.

He has 37 years of work experience in Banking, straddling the public sector and the new- generation private sector. He has a knack of getting the best out of people through active listening, empathy and empowerment. This story is a personal one, of how actively engaging employees helped turn around a derailed unit.

Premraj's views have been published in leading periodicals. His ideas and suggestions are practical and futuristic. You are welcome to send him your comments and suggestions on Employment Engagement at premrajkvr@gmail.com

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OUT-BELIEVE YOUR LIMITATIONS

It is a lovely and happy Sunday (I had some bullet coffee just now; so I am a wee bit hyper). As I write this, I am going from being excited, motivated and focused to feeling completely scared, overwhelmed and discouraged, as the thought of being locked at home jolts me. I think all of us are losing it a bit.

A week ago, our Prime Minister announced a nationwide lockdown to strengthen our fight against Covid-19. The lockdown is the need of the hour, as it is for our nation's safety. But it has brought along a lot of uncertainty, especially for people who are stuck in a routine - like me! As I take a deep breath and relax my shoulders, I remind myself that the best things in life are at the exit ramp of our comfort zone.

I would like to share with you a story that comes to my mind.

Once upon a time, there was this man who had committed a crime. He was sent to the king for punishment.

The king told him that he could choose between two punishments.

The first option was that he would be hung by a rope, while the second was to take whatever was behind the big, dark, scary, mysterious iron door.

The criminal quickly decided to choose the rope.

As the noose was being slipped around his neck, he turned to the king and asked,

“By the way, I am asking out of curiosity. What’s behind that door?”

The king laughed and replied,

“You know, it’s funny. I offer everyone the same choice, and nearly everyone picks the rope!”

“So,” said the criminal, “tell me. What’s behind the door? I mean, obviously, I won’t tell any-one,” he said, pointing to the noose around his neck.

The king chuckled and answered,

“Freedom! However, it seems most people are so afraid of the unknown that they immediately take the rope.”

I love how this story encourages people to overcome fear.

It offers a powerful reminder of the dangers of clinging to the familiar. Now, let’s figure out how to swap “life sucks” with “feeling lucky”?

☐ *First, we should use a jackhammer to drill down into the depths of your subconscious – until we discover that pesky “limited thinking” which is getting in the way of your happiness.*

☐ *Then, we will re-program your subconscious, turning destructive beliefs into instructive beliefs.*

Afterwards, you will

☐ *Feel stronger – and proud of your inner strength.*

☐ *Be more optimistic about where your life is headed.*

- ❑ *Express more gratitude daily for all that you presently have.*
- ❑ *Feel far better about your life – on a daily basis.*

Would you like to know the 4-step approach I take when I feel trapped in life?

I sometimes refer to this approach as “Creating Pain-O-Ramic Vision” – because it gives us a full 360 degree panoramic view of the pain in our life.

Then it helps us focus on all the gain in our pain – until we find the beautiful blessings and helpful lessons our pain has brought us.

1. Breathe deeply. Enter a meditative state.

Dare to think about your five most painful incidents in your life, right now.

2. Become physically aware of how your body feels, thinking about these incidents.

Do you feel an intense sensation in your stomach, neck, head and back?

When you start by tapping into your physical senses first, you are starting to slowly get in touch with your pain.

After you are aware of the pain in your body, breathe it out. Try to release it. You will then be more prepared to explore your emotional pain.

3. Put all your limiting beliefs from Step 2 on trial.

Take time to cross-examine each destructive belief like a tough attorney – until you are able to turn it into an instructive belief.

For example:

- ☐ *List down proof of your talents, energy and the willpower to get what you want.*
- ☐ *List down proof of how the world has supported plenty of others in their dreams – so you're up next.*
- ☐ *Create a list of any and all contradictory evidence you can think up, which proves that your limited beliefs are just that — limited!*
- ☐ *Turn your limitations into opportunities.*

4. Connect with people.

Spend time with happy people – those who are successful in the area or domain from which your disappointment and pain arise. When you spend as much time as possible with happy people who have what you want, you shift your belief system further into the realm of positivity. You change what your subconscious mind thinks is “normal” and develop a “new nor-mal”, which is more optimistic. The two are just a click away from each other.

With all of these wonderful pointers, why do we need to limit our beliefs? Do you know the most powerful weapon on earth? It is not the atomic bomb; it is the human mind.

We're a planet full of folks walking around with metaphysical ropes around our necks, wondering why we feel a little emotionally and spiritually dead to the world around us.

Today, decide to have the courage to push past your fears.

- ☐ *Make the decision to finally take off those ropes that bind you.*

- ❑ *Bravely start opening those doors which lead to the unfamiliar.*
- ❑ *Recognize that when nothing changes, nothing changes.*
- ❑ *Also, know that if you keep doing what you've always been doing, you'll keep getting what you've always been getting.*

Remember, opening doors to the unknown is the only way to ensure that you're headed to-wards new opportunities, freedom, growth and greater joy.

Thank you, Lockdown 2020; this learning wouldn't have happened without you.



Manjoo Shree N has a Masters in Psychology, an international certification in Life Coaching, and national certifications in Human Resource Management, Transactional Analysis and Reiki healing. She is the Founder of Lifeolicious, a

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Manjoo Shree is one of the first 3 coaches in the world to combine coaching and singing. She is the author of "Life Parachute", a self-help book for children aged 10+. You can contact her through her social media handle - Lifeolicious - on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, or through her website www.lifeolicious.com