

COVID-19 BUSINESS CONTINGENCY PLAYBOOK

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: LEANNE SHEAR





A LETTER FROM THE FOUNDERS

To our community,

Our mission is to keep the fitness and wellness communities healthy and thriving. That doesn't change during the COVID-19 crisis: we are on the front lines, here to support you and stand with you.

Many of us are dealing with the greatest levels of fear and uncertainty we have ever experienced. Not much seems stable - from our lives to our businesses.

But there are some things that are very stable. The people around you, the connections you have, and the community you've built. It's the energy, insight and fortitude that comes from those bonds that allow us to wake up each day and put one foot in front of the other, knowing eventually, that *"this too shall pass"*.

At BFS, we wanted to wrap you in that embrace and bring you the knowledge, wisdom, and insight from some of our industry's thought leaders who were excited to share their knowledge and expertise to help you navigate these uncertain times. The BFS COVID-19 Business Contingency Playbook is the first compilation in a series of an ongoing, growing body of knowledge that we will continue to share with you as we embrace the knowledge of each other, and ourselves.

We are working expediently to move these resources to an online portal where you can access them continuously and at your convenience.

And, our work doesn't stop with this version of the COVID-19 Playbook.

The world is changing daily and you have enough to keep track of without also scouring the internet for pearls of wisdom that can help the specific situations you face. Let us do that for you. We have brought it all together for you, and we hope that in the moments of downtime when you need inspiration - you can literally take a page from the play-book, and feel that much better off.

Sincerely,

Nt Etuk
Co-founder
Boutique Fitness
Solutions

Julian Barnes
Co-founder & CEO
Boutique Fitness
Solutions



DISCLAIMER

BFS is agnostic: our goal is to simply provide you with the best and most information possible, so this playbook may contain different points of view and information based on different experts' experience and business models.

This Playbook will continually be updated/changed with the most pertinent information as the nature of this pandemic is constantly changing.

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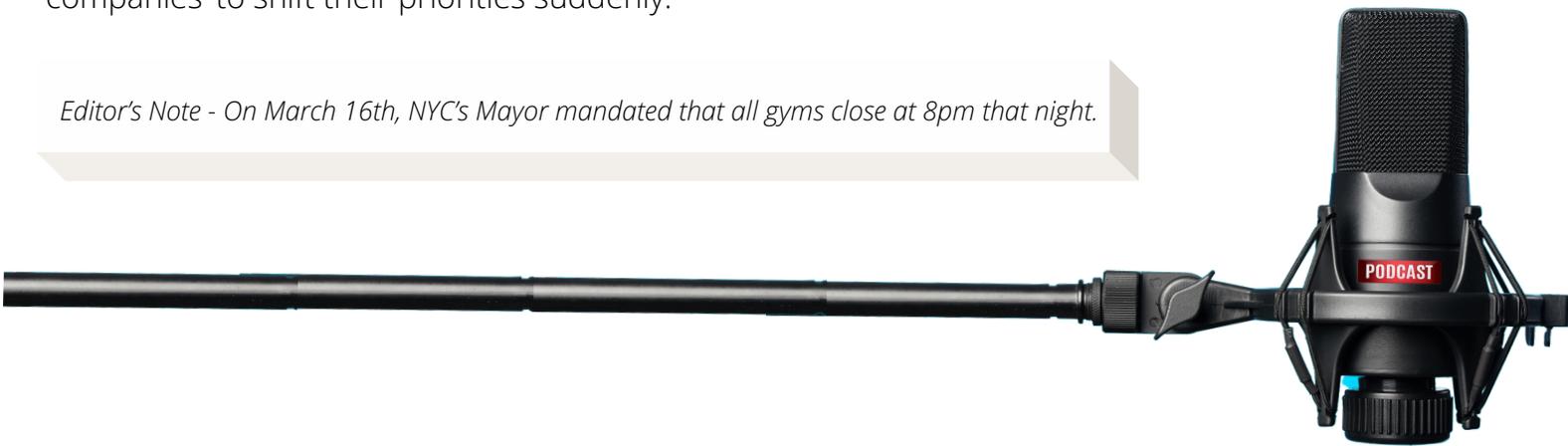
**CRISIS
MANAGEMENT
INTERVIEW
WITH ROGER HARVEY**



CRISIS MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW

On March 15, 2020, BFS Co-Founder, **Julian A. Barnes**, interviewed **Roger Harvey**, the CEO of Switch Playground, to learn how Switch prepared for, and reacted to, the COVID crisis. During Roger's twenty five (25) year career in management positions in the fitness industry, he has experienced two natural disasters (NYC Blackout and Hurricane Sandy), two terrorist attacks and a few other external shocks to the company, all of which were unpredictable and forced his companies' to shift their priorities suddenly.

Editor's Note - On March 16th, NYC's Mayor mandated that all gyms close at 8pm that night.



BFS: Roger - what is the most important thing that you have learned about crisis management throughout your career?

Harvey: Always remain calm, breathe and stay focused on helping others.

Archimedes said,

“give me but one firm spot upon which to stand and I shall move the earth.”

When you remember what you stand for now, you have a position that allows you to then hold up others. And if it's a crazy, chaotic time, people are going to have to lean on whoever provides the best, strongest, never failing support.

For me, I always remember that my purpose is to help others, and regardless of what's happening around me, that is the foundation for everything that I do.

BFS: When we spoke a few days ago, I was amazed at the swiftness and certainty of your response to the COVID crisis. You had already made a decision and you planned to take more long term actions regarding finance. What is the process you went through to make those decisions and why was it so important to act swiftly and decisively while others are taking a “wait-and-see” approach?

Harvey: Well, the decision making process that I always follow is the same. I refer to the process of understanding expectations. And it's a six step process that applies to any situation.

Organize, communicate, educate, evaluate, modify & repeat

I recommend the excellent book that is on the unexpected, called ***A Black Swan - The Impact of the Highly Improbable*** by Naseem Nicholas Taleb who has a quote in that book, that is very powerful and is important to remember every single day in crisis:

“Invest in preparedness, not in prediction.”

So I can't predict what's going to happen next with the Coronavirus, but I can do the best that I can to be prepared for whatever happens as a result of it.

BFS: What is the first decision you made when you realized you needed to make a decision?

Harvey: Our first official communication to our members was sent on March 6, stating that we are aware of the matter and updating them on some of the steps that we had already begun to initiate in-house regarding better cleaning and disinfecting of the studio than ever before.

BFS: What did you do next?

Harvey: We had conversations with our team, beginning with the other members of the management team, and we explored all possibilities. As soon as we decided to reduce class capacity, we began having in-person conversations with members of the team, letting them know that these cutbacks are not performance related and that we have to make some adaptations in the way the business is operating because we won't be able to survive this crisis otherwise. I understand and am sympathetic to the cost to the human psyche with these things. I know how difficult it is.

BFS: When and why did you decide to reduce class capacity? How did you know how much you should reduce class capacity and when did you make that decision?

Harvey: We followed the same playbook that we use everyday. We're constantly looking at the attendance in classes and evaluating based on the context of the season, the time of year, the weather, etc.. What trends might be happening in the upcoming week? We didn't finalize the decision until the Governor of New York mandated that businesses had to adjust capacity, although we had discussed that earlier in the morning. So as soon as the Governor made that statement, we were already prepared to do that.

BFS: How much did you reduce your class capacity?

Harvey: The first round of reductions was probably 25 to 30 percent and now we are somewhere below 50 percent of our offerings.

BFS: So you have done two things, you have removed classes from the schedule and reduced the number of people in each class or only one or the other?

Harvey: We've done both because we believe that's in the best interest of the consumers. And will remain in these levels until we are able to increase capacity again and when there is sufficient demand to add classes. I would actually expect that we are more likely to add classes before we expand capacity. But again, we're prepared for either.

BFS: Since you reduced both class capacity and the number of spots in a class, it would appear that you need fewer instructors for the foreseeable future, is that correct?

Harvey: That's correct. We've had a reduction in services and so we don't have as many classes and operating hours to offer employees.

BFS: And because your instructors are classified as employees, that means that they have certain protections available to them if you no longer need the services at the moment. So what type of conversations have you been having with your instructors around headcount reduction as a result of this crisis we're in?

Harvey: So far, we've been providing instructors, front desk, maintenance, our entire team, all with the same information: we are adapting as quickly as we can in an environment where we do not have all of the answers that we would like to have. We have been talking to ADP, our payroll service provider, about the various options that we are considering to ensure that we have all of the facts that will enable us to make a decision. We have done our best to spread some of those classes among our Instructors to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to earn an income. If NYC orders us to close, we will have to initiate layoffs and we will do our best to provide them with the instructions for applying for unemployment.

BFS: What do you say to studio owners who are uncertain about the speed at which they need to make these headcount reduction decisions?

Harvey: It's an excellent question. I would counsel them to not be afraid of making a mistake. Everybody's going to make mistakes; It's part of the human experience. And so consider your alternatives. Make a decision and continue through that process of understanding expectations. So organize your options. Make a decision.

Everybody's going to make mistakes

Organize. Communicate the decision to the necessary people. **Educate**, provide additional context to any of the points that you've communicated, **Evaluate**. Ask questions. Listen to everybody. Don't just tell it. Invest the time in listening to feedback. We're evaluating what happened, identifying things that we could have done better and recognizing things that we didn't do that we can do better, Modify then Repeat. So. Be not afraid of making a mistake because you're going to make them anyway. The more quickly that you make decisions, the more quickly you have feedback that's coming back. It will allow you to make decisions. And not being afraid of that, I believe, is probably the most important thing that we can focus on.

BFS: Do you think it's a mistake to follow the wait and see approach?

Harvey: Not necessarily, but do that consciously, In my opinion, there is a difference between pausing and pausing to impose strategy. Pausing strategically comes with the intention of "I'm going to stop and by doing this, I'm going to be prepared for other eventualities." Make the best decisions you can with all the information that we have.

BFS: Last question - what else are you doing to ensure that Switch survives?

Harvey: It's the same thing for anybody who's a business operator - you need to be able to assess the cash requirements that you're going to have and manage your cash flows. Since we are a for profit business, we need to make sure that we're not losing money because we have a limited amount of funds.

We have also submitted our application for the NYC Small Business Loans that they are providing to businesses that are impacted by the COVID crisis. We'll listen for any other programs that might be beneficial for us.

One of the most important things that I can do as the CEO of Switch is to

help people remain strong and let them know that we're going to make it through it and then help steer that path so that it becomes a reality

ABOUT ROGER:

Roger Harvey is the CEO for Switch Playground, a growing chain of HIIT studios based in Manhattan. He is a 25+ year veteran of the fitness industry, with a bachelor's degree in Movement Science from the University of Michigan. He was the Chief Operating Officer for Crunch Fitness for 13+ years, helping the organization grow from two small studios to a nationwide chain of more than 25 gyms. He has provided consulting services for several start-up brands (Gotham Gym and Big Al's Family Fitness), and serves as a management and leadership mentor to some of the most talented young professionals in the industry. A dedicated father of two daughters, Roger's professional purpose is simple: Do your best to help others today. Do it again – and do it better – tomorrow. "Regretting means that you want to change the past. Remembering means that you want to change the future."



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HOW DO I FIND THE CASH FLOW TO SURVIVE?

LISE KUECKER

FOUNDER, STUDIO GROW





How do I find the cash flow to survive?

On January 20th, I received my first Covid-19 email from a client in Hong Kong that began:

“There’s this virus...”

In my wildest *Outbreak*-infused dreams, I never could have imagined that email was the start of a worldwide pandemic, shutdowns and partial or full studio closures in over a dozen countries we work in, and a completely new view of what “business as usual” means for a boutique studio owner.

Since that first email, we’ve fielded several thousand emails from clients worldwide. The big question every message ends with is:

How do I find the cash flow to survive?

It’s the single most important question we have to answer to ensure our livelihoods continue.

We’ve spent the last 8 weeks working with our Asian clients to ensure they not only survive, but are positioned for incredible growth after we move on from this crisis. And, we will move on.

As the ****magical 35 day marker**** passes, studios overseas are reaching back out for help with a deluge of highly intentional clients, who now, more than ever, have placed their health as a #1 priority.

Below is the Cash Flow Protocol we’ve put into place with thousands of our clients around the world. Not every step is an easy decision or will be right for your business, but as studio owners have thoughtfully used this framework, they’re breathing an air of peace and relief that financially they will survive, and thrive.

The Hard Decisions

1. **Strongly consider leaving membership payments in place during this crisis with alternate class and session options.** Our teams have weathered hurricanes, natural disasters and more over the last few years. The one commonality: The need to keep our membership payments flowing. We've had a great response to this approach. Clients want community, even over a slightly fuzzy Zoom link, and you can offer them a peace of mind and a chance to remain in the best health possible by simply moving sessions virtual.
2. What if the continuation for recurring payments is not a good idea for your audience? **Consider a "Pay What You Can" option.** Two of our studios started this recently and brought in record amounts of income as students opted to support the studio by paying more than their typical memberships. That's a win-win for the studio, the team, and their clients!
3. **We recommend not refunding class packs.** Extend the number of classes and expiration period to account for any closures or time with limited schedules. This has been the common practice for nearly all small businesses we've come into contact with, whether calligraphers or boutique studio owners.

The Cut Backs

1. **Immediately request a rent abatement from your landlord** ***sample letter at end of Playbook***. Consider asking for a 100% rent and triple net abatement for 60 days and negotiating backwards from there. Many landlords are afraid, not because they'll miss 2 months rent, but because there will likely be shuttered storefronts across America. Keep a special eye out for local property tax abatements. If your landlord is not paying property taxes, this should impact your Triple Net. Ask for an immediate reduction, not waiting for a refund at the end of the year.
2. **Immediately request relief from your lender.** We recommend asking for a 100% principle and interest relief for 60 days with interest-only payments for an additional 60 days, and negotiate backwards from there. You need time to recover from this crisis, and this approach is a fast way to make sure it happens. Many banks are already working with clients to ensure this happens
3. **Immediately request relief from your credit card companies.** See a theme? It's time to hold off as many bills as possible so you can attempt to support yourself and your team. Speaking of which...
4. **Prioritize your team members.** As we await Federal action, we don't yet have all the details of how the government will assist with our team members. It's clear that provisions are being made for Unemployment, Disability payments, and Paid Family Leave. This is changing daily and we expect to see continued updates. In the meantime, it's best to consider who are the must-have members of your team that will continue to service clients throughout this time.

The Add Nows

1. **Immediately begin virtual classes.** For all my perfectionists, it's time to put aside Alo Moves worthy dreams, and think functional. Your clients are looking for familiarity in this time and you can offer that just by being you. We've watched hordes of clients who initially asked for freezes and cancellations, change their tune and request that their memberships continue just for access to virtual class programs. ****check out the COVID-19 Resource Library for upcoming webinars on this topic****
2. **Create a new Intro Package**, one that includes your current lineup of virtual classes as well as in-person classes for when you re-open. You may not be able to compete with fully fledged online programs, but you can offer so much more, including future in-person sessions at your studio.
3. **Use nutrition and accountability to improve your client's health.** Over the last 7 months, we've tested an incredible nutrition program across 77 studios. These client's have sent more messages, thanking their studios for the anti-inflammatory and immune boosting meal plans that they're living by during this crisis. Your clients are home, hungry to get healthy and you can support them through this. This is an exceptional upsell for current clients who have time on their hands and access to Instacart. ****join the upcoming BFS | HSN webinars for more info on nutrition programs****
4. **Pre-sell a limited number of amazing packages.** The key phrase here: LIMITED NUMBER. Selling 100 year long paid-in-full memberships at a 50% discount is far more damaging to your long-term cash flow than Covid-19 ever will be. Consider how many memberships or large class packages priced between \$1,000 and \$1,500 will supply the cash flow needed for the next month. Sell that and nothing more.
5. Are you the main attraction? **Offer a limited number of private packages with you.** These should be expensive and accompanied by a note that these packages are funding the studio during these unprecedented times. Lots of clients will jump at the chance for 1-1 time with you and can support the studio in the process.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Lise Kuecker is a multi-7 figure serial entrepreneur in the health and wellness industry. Beginning in 2006, she built a yoga, Pilates and personal training business inside of Intel Corporation. In 2016, she sold her studios for multiple 7 figures within a five month period. Her "failing studio" sold for 7 figures on it's own, proof that even studios with massive struggles that are losing thousands of dollars a month are capable of revitalization with the right systems. Since 2015, Lise has taught tens of thousands of fitness and mind-body professionals, working one-thousand plus clients in 18 countries in an intimate setting. Her team, which include 21 employees and team members, are award winning management professionals in small box health clubs, personal training studios, kickboxing studios, barre studios, Pilates studios, heated and non-heated yoga studios and HIIT studios.

Hungry for more ideas and information during these crazy times? Join us on Instagram @studiogrowco as we share daily updates on our Stories.



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HOW THE BOUTIQUE FITNESS INDUSTRY CAN TAKE ON COVID-19

PATRICK ARMITAGE

VP SALES & MARKETING, ZINGFIT



How The Boutique Fitness Industry Can Take On COVID-19

The coronavirus situation is unprecedented, we are all searching for answers.



Photo by Daniel Tafjord on Unsplash

Our boutique fitness industry – the gyms, studios and brands – we have all worked so hard to help build, are tackling their first industry-wide crisis. We all had one eye on the economy but none of us expected something quite like this.

Moreover, the situation surrounding COVID-19 is fluid. The daily speed of change means issues that demanded answers change before we can even implement the solution.

What were the right answers to the issues and questions we faced yesterday might not be the right answers today.

As taboo as it might be to write it, one hard truth remains consistent, given where we are in the current crisis, “It will get worse before it gets better.” It is important to say this out loud, acknowledge it and move to the next phase of responding strategically—reacting wisely to the ‘here and now’ and planning for the future. From scenario planning, to staff logistics, to managing rent and developing a new marketing strategy, all these are areas that demand our intellectual muscles.

In these uncharted waters no one can claim to have all the answers to the issues but we wanted to share with you some thoughts and observations to help you navigate today, tomorrow, the coming weeks and months.

FIVE THINGS TO REMEMBER.

1. **We live in an age of easy and unfettered access to digital media.** Social media has put people in constant touch with each other. Likewise, brands have direct access to and dialogue with their customers. In times of crisis (perhaps even more than in the good times), social media is a powerful and the best tool for communication.
2. **Creating content is cheaper than it's ever been.** Whether it's photography, design, or video, the creative tools we have access to, combined with a smart, creative millennial population (sorry Gen X-ers) mean we can readily create great content. The only thing not to forget, take the time and discipline to develop good ideas.
3. **The boutique fitness industry has been a force for good.** It may be hard to truly measure it, but we know our niche (a very big niche!) is the major driver of growth in the wider fitness industry. And we know that boutique and group fitness have helped shift fitness to be a social and community experience. It's fair to say that boutique fitness has driven positive change when it comes to the broader wellness of society and when the crisis is over it will do so again.
4. **There are incredible thought leaders and entrepreneurs in our space.** From famous thought leaders who founded brands such as SoulCycle, barre3, and Peloton to the inspiring business leaders and entrepreneurs in cities across the world; there is a wealth of intellect, proven experience, entrepreneurial spirit and grit. This is a community that now needs to come together and support one another.
5. **The people who choose to workout at boutique fitness studios are not just gym-goers, they are members of a tribe.** The entrepreneurs and teams leading boutique fitness studios and gyms have nurtured and cultivated real tribes, this is something incredibly special. Business schools all over the world lecture and teach students about building brands. Studying it is one thing—doing it is what really matters. Galvanize the industry, embrace your brand and engage your tribe.

Galvanize the industry, embrace your brand & engage your tribe.

TEN WAYS TO POSITIVELY RESPOND TO COVID-19

#1 Embrace social media—it's OK be open and vulnerable.

Don't be afraid to get on social media and talk about what has happened to your studio. There's no right or wrong way to do this. But with a positive mindset you could start by posting what your heart truly feels and what you feel deep down your customers want to hear from you.

As the founders and leaders of your brand talk directly to your customers—share a video, explain how you feel and commit to continuing to talk to your customers. Daily content is OK, your brand is a big part of their lives. It pays to map out what content and messages you want to share each day. **Your customers are scared.**

Remember your customers are also experiencing a lot of fear about the impact of COVID-19. Sharing enables us to connect more deeply and address what is happening and start to address our collective mental health.

Put wellness and fitness at the heart of what you continue to share on social media. In an ideal world you may want to monetize content. That may well be part of your longer-term strategy. However, in the here and now give your customers free content, exercise classes, and wellness vlogs on sleep, mental health, and nutritional guidance.

Food and sleep will be a big part of how your customers stay healthy while we all self-isolate—share good advice on both of these with your tribe. Moments like this often force us to change, your customers will thank you for helping them adopt new nutrition and sleep patterns.

#2 The power of video content.

There is a race happening to sell you streaming content solutions. At zingfit we think these types of solutions have a role to play but before you jump in think carefully about your video content and monetization strategy.

Don't gate or create paywalls for video streaming content, at least not right now.

It's not contrary to recommend that you offer free content. In doing so you will help your customers continue to workout and you will maintain engagement with them, don't put roadblocks in their way right now.

Their whole lives (likes yours) have been turned upside down. If you offer something as a gift, the positivity will be returned. Even go as far as to ask your clients to share your exercises and content with their friends—spread the positivity. There is a light at the end of this tunnel and the more people who know about your brand the better.

If that isn't enough to convince you why free content is good, we recommend selling packages and posting your schedule via your studio management platform and then running your classes over Zoom.

At zingfit our Support Team has been helping studios think through the free content and Zoom approaches. We have published a Knowledge Base article on how to manage the workflows for selling and scheduling "virtual classes" and then running them on Zoom (or Google Hangouts, etc...)

**Don't forget to apply good
sleep and nutrition to yourself.
Plenty of sleep and self-care
will help you make the right
decisions in the coming
months.**

#3 Ways you can safely engage your customers while we social distance and self-isolate.

Include your instructors in the digital and video content you share with your clients. Trying to do everything on your own will be hard.

Your instructors have been a big part of you building your brand, your culture, and your tribe. Ask them to help you with creating exercise videos, uploading to YouTube, streaming on Facebook, together you can create a social content program. **Your instructors and staff are part of your brand too.**

It might sound old-fashioned but if it's feasible enlist your instructors to help you call your clients to say, "hi" and ask them how they are doing. Building on what Tuck Yoga & Barre are doing combine this kind of outreach with livestreaming from your Facebook page. Just remember to keep control of your social media accounts and who has access. Later on you might want to change access rights.

If you do call customers: You will probably end up leaving voicemails on most people's phones. But make sure you can talk to your customers for 10 minutes when they do pick up, so you can ask them how they are feeling, discuss what exercise they can do and if you have video or social content published, point them to it. Write a script or clear conversation points that you want your instructors to mention when they speak to your clients. And, if you end up leaving voicemails, work out what you want the message to say, to create a consistent message whoever is doing it. (Leaving messages is awkward, you want to get this one right!)

Warmth and human connection count for a lot at times like this and sharing that warmth as quickly as possible is a good idea. You can't do it all, work with your team and set a goal for making calls.

#4 Consider whether you and your instructors can run 1:1 training programs at scale

This might sound strange given we're all in the business of group fitness. But what if you could create a 1:1 training program that can be deployed in a one-to-many way?

The program(s) could be based on your class or an exercise regime you feel comfortable sharing. If you own an indoor cycling studio, you might create a lower body strength training program and a cardio program. **Think outside your four walls.**

Apps that connect fitness trainers to their clients are getting better and better. TrueCoach: <https://truecoach.co/> is a great example of an app that allows fitness trainers to work remotely with many, many clients. You and your instructors can load up the exercise regime, check in with your clients and even message over the app.

Remote personal training apps can overcome social distancing. If you try this approach, test it out for yourself first and then work closely with your instructors and explain why, how and what you want to do.

It could be a way to maintain some of your revenue and increase your offering in the future too.

#5 Think outside these four walls and get outdoors.

Literally think outside your four walls. Depending on what the local or national government has mandated, you still might be able to get outside for some fresh air and a run, bike, or walk. Ask your customers to share their favorite running, walking, and bike routes.

Map it on google maps, write about it on a blog and/or in social media and share the route with all your customers. Lead by example and publish your favorite runs and nudge a few of your customers who you know will help you, to get others to follow suit.

#6 Encourage and reward, even more than you did before—now your doors are closed.

It might sound counter intuitive to reward people when they are not coming to your studio. But in these stressful times what better way to help people feel happy, keep endorphins up, and trigger a sense of delight than with a simple reward, courtesy of your brand.

Encourage and reward your customers for tracking their exercise and sharing it with you and your studio/gym community.

If you or your customers don't like leader boards or explicit tracking, create a discrete way of sharing personal fitness achievements. The goal is to continue a sense of community and tribe, in which people can take pride in their exercise.

Reward your customers based on trust with some cool studio merchandise. You can reward based on miles run, commitment, or just from your heart!

A branded tee or vest arriving in the mail will brighten someone's day up immensely and the next time they go outside to exercise there's a good chance they will wear it. What a great thing for your brand and your customer..

#7 Remember when you got old-fashioned Direct Mail?

If you live in the USA, I'm guessing you got a postcard from Peloton a while back. Why did a digital, content and subscription-based company send a traditional mailer? Because it works.

Find a favorite photo of your studio, or a class that you are able to use in marketing. (If it includes class members ask them in writing if it's OK to share it in a one time mailer.). Create a simple, premium postcard and send it to your customers with some heartfelt text on the back.

Don't be afraid to ask your customer to pin it up at home, to remind them how important it is to exercise and keep well while we are all self-isolating.

If postcards aren't your style, what about designing and printing an inexpensive sticker to mail out that your customers can put on their water bottle or laptop.

#8 Business-to-business support will be invaluable, as we all come together to deal with COVID-19.

If it doesn't exist today, create a local forum with your boutique fitness business friends, frenemies and the competition.

Facebook and LinkedIn have communities and groups. It's highly likely you're already in a boutique fitness forum or group but if you're not find one and request to join it.

If you can't find one, set one up. If your town/city has a number of boutique studios, reach out via social media and say "hi" and consider setting up a local boutique fitness group (you can make it private). Finding similar businesses and entrepreneurs to share your experiences will really help.

When it comes to building forums, if you're an independent boutique fitness entrepreneur don't exclude boutique fitness franchise owners and vice versa. You might feel very different but both types of business owner are deeply vested in their studio and you both have good ideas to share.

There are no guarantees on what you'll learn or what problem shared will be eased. But by coming together there is a better chance of getting invaluable advice. It could be how to write or speak with your landlord about a rent holiday. Or, how you can work with your equipment company on easing your financing commitments until revenue is coming back into your studio. **Boutique fitness studios have become cornerstones of local brick and mortar downtowns and shopping centers. They will be part of the solution to get consumers back into stores in the difficult months after coronavirus.**

Your boutique fitness studio helps with footfall to your local area. Other businesses will really miss your presence. People go to other stores in your neighborhood because you're there. There's a good chance there are even two boutique fitness studios on the same block. You're important to your local business community. Talk to the Chamber of Commerce and local business forums to see how they can help you and how you can help them.

#9 Why focus on marketing your boutique fitness studio, when things are not good?

There is a popular adage,

“When times are good you should advertise. When times are bad you must advertise.”

Big business spends money buying media and while you may not have that luxury, you do have creative and natural marketing instincts that have got you this far. Taking ideas from above and some of your own, invest your time and skills in continuing to market. You want to maintain mind space with your customers, find new social media followers and continue to promote your brand and fitness regimes—ready for when your doors re-open!

#10 Plan for the future.

It's early days but the data out of Asia suggests there is light at the end of the tunnel. **There are certainties in life. As bad as it is right now and as hard as it gets over the next few weeks, and perhaps the coming months, it will get better.**

None of us know when we will be able to celebrate the re-opening of our industry's boutique fitness gyms and studios but it will happen and celebrate we will.

Your clients **will** want to get back to working out as soon as they can. You have created demand for the brand and experience you built—tell that to yourself everyday, ready for when you re-open. **Imagine and project into the future: If people want to get back into the gym after the Holiday Season, imagine what it will be like after this crisis is over.**

Society will value wellness and fitness more than it ever has.

Right now you need to focus on many of the things mentioned above to engage your customers but don't leave it too long to start thinking about how you will announce your re-opening. Don't just rely on an email when you open back up.

What actions, ideas, channels and content thoughts can you put into a media and marketing plan now, so you don't lose them and lose time later on planning. Start a basic plan now and when ideas come to you write them down, ready for putting more structure into them later on.

What will other creative and entrepreneurial businesses do in adjacent industries, that have been similarly impacted?

IN CONCLUSION, REMEMBER WHY PEOPLE LOVE BOUTIQUE FITNESS.

It's early days but the data out of Asia suggests there is light at the end of the tunnel.

There are certainties in life. As bad as it is right now and as hard as it gets over the next few weeks, and perhaps the coming months, it will get better.

You and your boutique fitness brand are one of the most important parts of their lives. Our world and the fitness industry has shifted over the past few years, customers are willing to spend more on experiences and more on their wellness.

Boutique fitness is has become a constant in people's daily lives. What was once a trend has become a mainstream, albeit the coolest, part of fitness culture.

Remember people will be hungry for their boutique fitness workout. When this is all over they will be craving exercise, community and wellbeing.

Don't get caught in analysis paralysis, start taking action and marketing to your customers to stay front of mind.

They rewarded you with their loyalty in the past and if you keep them engaged they will do so again.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Patrick is the VP of Marketing & Sales at zingfit, an online scheduling software platform that seamlessly integrates studio management, marketing & e-retail features. He is passionate about building brands, fascinated by the impact of culture on brands and how brands can become part of culture. Over the past 18 years, he has had the opportunity to work in London, New York and Colorado. Prior to zingfit, he led global advertising campaigns for silicon-valley brands, ran social media advertising and content for major retail brands and worked with innovators in crowdsourcing and 3D-printing. Today, at zingfit he heads-up company growth across the world,

overseeing marketing, partnerships and sales. He loves getting to know zingfit's clients and when he's on the road, a typical day will include 4 meetings and 3 workouts.



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HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CLIENTS AND MAINTAIN A COMMUNITY DURING A CRISIS

CHRIS BEER

FOUNDER, B.WELL CONSULTING





How to support your clients and maintain a community during a crisis

With the advent of "Social Distancing," how can studio owners proactively foster their community while protecting their financial exposure? In this article, we'll look at specific ways that you can retain and engage your studio community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Take a deep breath.

I know this is scary for all small business owners, but I'm urging everyone to rise above the storm - think of Warren Buffett's famous quote,

"We simply attempt to be fearful when others are greedy and to be greedy only when others are fearful."

Let's for a moment replace "greed" with business acumen. In that context, "greed" is not a bad thing -- it's asking you to tap into that amazingly smart business owner brain that has brought you to this point, thinking clearly about how you can be nimble and position your businesses as a place of stability and safety.

It's a time to be calm and nimble. I spent the first 20 years of my career in the trading pits and learned that, in times of panic, you need to chuck aside any fear and obstinacy in order to make the best decision for your organization. Gather whatever facts you can and move forward with the best possible decision, being ready to be nimble and change course as needed along the way.

That being said, here are my recommendations for three things studio owners can do today to support their clients and maintain a sense of community.

Maintain Open and Honest Communication...

...with your staff.

When the world around you is unstable, your staff is looking for you to stay sane and hold things together. That may feel like a tremendous weight on your shoulders, but you need to rise up as a leader and communicate what you do know at this time. A virtual meeting (using Zoom or another platform that allows your team to hear your voice and see each other) is ideal, but an email will suffice if that's not possible.

Communicate that you are doing everything in your power to protect their income. By showing that you care for them, your expectations of cleaning protocol, working on virtual services and pitching in with little more flexibility will be met with open ears and open hearts.

...and with your clients.

Your clients are being inundated with hundreds of COVID-19 emails from every business they've ever visited. (Did you ever think you'd ever hear about the sanitary practices of Home Depot?) What steps can you take to make sure that your clients receive your message (and that it is well received).

As with any message that you'd send from your studio to your clients, you want to think about delivering the right message to the right person at the right time. When crafting messaging, segment clients by activity/usage and think about the purpose of your message. Don't send another "we keep things clean" email just because everyone else is doing it. Make a personal appeal as a small business owner who is doing their best to serve the community they love.

Run a report to see which clients are still attending and which clients have stopped visiting. In the messaging to clients who are attending, thank them for their loyalty and think creatively about how you can keep them coming (offer semi-privates or reduce class times to be in line with social distancing or offer to have instructors hold outdoor sessions or small group classes). For those who are staying home, note that you respect every decision regarding social distancing, and that you're working on developing online content that allows them to stay connected with the studio community they love.

Get creative about what you offer and how you do it.

In-studio (if applicable)

- Make an announcement about reducing class sizes to accommodate for personal space. (You may be seeing a dip in classes anyway, so this is self-fulfilling.) This shows that you are maintaining your position of “movement keeps you healthy” but assuring people that they will get to maintain “social distance” in your studio.
- I know you clean like crazy on a daily basis, but make a special show of having front desk staff doing their cleaning while clients are in class. It makes me feel good when I see someone wiping down the door handle we all just touched.
- Nix the partner workouts, adopt a “no adjustment” policy and limit or temporarily eradicate use of props — great opportunity to be positive and show how strong and powerful bodyweight movements can be.

Online classes - start working on this if you haven't already

- I find that coupling Zoom (\$15/mo for business account) with MINDBODY (or whatever service you use) is a simple way to keep clients engaged while keeping your registrations/accounting intact. Clients continue to sign up for classes (now billed as Virtual Classes) via your app or online. Have your front desk staff email the Zoom meeting link to all registrants 15 min prior to the class. This would allow your community to stay connected while keeping a monetary value to the class.
- If you want to explore another option, Namastream is a sleek interface that allows your clients to pay for and stream your videos all in one place. It is \$179/mo and you can find more information on plans [here](#).
- Offering online classes does a lot of things. You get ahead of requests for membership holds. You keep people connected to your brand. It allows you to approach a scary time with a little humor and grace. You can get creative and ask your teachers to create their own mini-classes filmed at home. It won't be perfect but nothing is right now. We're all just trying our best to keep going and maintain connection/community — your clients will appreciate the effort.

Offer unique opportunities for your studio community to stay connected.

While gathering in person may be challenging, human beings will always crave community and connection. Support your clients' emotional wellbeing by offering meetups that are not just focused on fitness -- set up a private Facebook group for clients, offer virtual coffee dates with the owners, lead a Zoom session on meditation, etc. Anything that you do now to show your community that you care for them with pay off greatly in long term loyalty.

Keep calm. Rise above the panic and (as always) put yourself in your staff and client's shoes. You've always thought of simple "path of least resistance" ways to help your studio community feel healthy, calm and connected. Keep a clear head and I don't doubt that you'll do the same in the coming weeks.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Chris Beer, the founder of B.Well Consulting, has a diverse background that is rooted in finance, driven by data, grounded by giving, fueled by entrepreneurial passion and made possible by hard work and grit.

After a 20 year career in finance, Chris became a MINDBODY-Certified Business Consultant to further her ability to help fitness and wellness owners make data-driven decisions that propel their organizations forward. Chris specializes in the development and implementation of business operating systems -- your company's unique way of doing things -- how it operates, goes to market, produces and deals with its clients. An effective business operating system transcends the people who are doing and managing the work, and is more valuable as a result.

A business that effectively operates without you is always more attractive to public and private sources of capital.

Driven to be humble and helpful, B.Well Consulting works with small businesses to create more success while working more efficiently and gaining a better understanding of what drives their revenue.



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HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TEAM DURING A CRISIS

KARI SAITOWITZ

FOUNDER + CEO, FHITTING ROOM



How to Manage Your Team During a Crisis

This is not an easy time to be a small business, is it? As if it isn't always hard enough, day in and day out. I want my studio leader friends to know I am here for you and with you in all the ways I can be. You can and will survive this and it is my true hope for you that you find a way to grow and expand from this challenge. Maybe not today, but eventually. Here are three ways I suggest you can try to make the most of a forced studio closure, downtime that is more than you've dealt with before, unplanned, but CAN be utilized to help your business long term.



CONSTANT + CANDID COMMUNICATION

Acknowledge the crisis early and communicate often. In times of uncertainty, transparency and frequency of communication are both paramount. Share information with your team they may not otherwise have, particularly if that information is critical to how you will manage through the crisis. I recommend some form of communication with your entire team daily. I personally like email so I can organize information by role and provide new information and/or actions needed.

**COMMUNICATE WITH
YOUR TEAM DAILY**

TEMPERATURE CHECK OFTEN

**you should be aware of
what's going on in
people's personal lives
and their different
points of view**

As a leader, you must understand where the heads and hearts of your team members are at all times. In crises, feelings can (and will) change rapidly. Making informed decisions requires staying informed, and not just about the crisis itself: you should be aware of what's going on in people's personal lives and their different points of view (and pain points). I recommend a mix of formal and information communication channels, including polls, emails, webinars, and phone/text. Offering options for open forums including the entire team as well as private channels, both personal and anonymous, ensures everyone has a means to provide honest feedback regardless of communication preferences.

INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

Form a cross functional task force with representation from every position at your company: I asked everyone on my team who was interested to be a part of a COVID-19 task force. Together we shared feedback from clients, weighed available information, and made important decisions with regard to our daily operations. During a crisis, the consequences of decisions are huge (not least, the potential to lose income). The more you include others in the process, the better everyone will feel about even the most challenging of situations and decisions. Having a task force also helps create ambassadors within the organization who can help provide transparency and information.

In a crisis, knowledge is power, and the more accurate information-sharing, the better.

EMPATHIZE + EDUCATE

Spend time trying to put yourself in the shoes of each of your team members. Let them know that you have heard and understand their concerns. Even if you don't have all the answers, acknowledging how team members feel goes a long way. Share as much fact-based information as possible. Consult with experts and other industry leaders. Let your team know what you know as well as what you don't know. Serve as a trusted resource for your team during times of need; stay on top of local, state, and federal policies, medical facts, employment law and any other topic that can impact team members.

CREATE POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The sooner you identify and acknowledge a crisis, the sooner you can begin contingency planning. Then, by the time the crisis crescendos, you will be in a position to share positive news and hope. Rather than being a victim of a crisis, be an innovator with a sustainable business plan that can be executed even in a worst-case scenario. While a crisis is likely to hamper your business significantly, empower yourself and your team to minimize downside and focusing on new upside. Assign people specific assignments. Keeping your team busy and goal oriented will lift everyone's spirits.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Prior to creating Fhitting Room, Kari, was a marketing executive at Pepsi. She focused on building equity for powerhouse brands and launching new product innovations. In 2007, she left the world of boardrooms and bubbles and entered the world of diapers and sleepless nights. Exhausted and time-starved, Kari began Functional High-Intensity Interval Training as a means to work off her pregnancy weight in her scarce free time.

Kari took her love of planning unique consumer experiences and finding creative solutions to develop a new way for anyone to access the benefits of a personal training session in a motivational group setting. This "Gym Idea" became the subject line of an email Kari sent to a close friend in 2012 and led to the opening of the first Fhitting Room location in a small studio on Manhattan's Upper East Side in March 2013.

Kari is the Founder + CEO of Fhitting Room overseeing the now three Fhitting Room studios in NYC. She has an MBA from Harvard Business School, where she graduated with honors, and she graduated summa cum laude with a BS in Economics from the Wharton School of University of Pennsylvania.



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**DON'T *JUST* GO DIGITAL!
SYSTEMS ARE THE ANSWER TO
YOUR RECOVERY**

KK HART

FOUNDER, HART MARKTING &
COMMUNICATIONS INC.





Don't *just* go Digital! Systems are the answer to your Recovery

Systems are the answer to your Recovery: Marketing + Sales + Operations are not impossible...
Let's talk about your options!

DEFINITION OF RECOVERY: A return of normal state of health, mind or strength

Stressed? Need Direction? Not sure of your next step? Once you've addressed your urgent needs, this may be the time to focus on the future and the things you should consider for your recovery- personal and professional!

BE PREPARED, NOT SCARED:

You can still....

- Implement Proven Systems + Best Practices
- Train + Develop your staff
- Become an Expert in Sales + Conversion
- Automate the Most Important Aspects of your Business
- Establish + Improve your Marketing
- Revolutionize Your Business For the 21st Century + Beyond
- Find + Retain New Clients (perfect for when you re-open!)

If you're simply looking for a way to offer classes online through this uncertain time, that's totally ok! Since my team and I work with clients who are serious about their sales, marketing, staff and systems operations, which includes launching an online studio, we advocate there is a place for both just streaming classes quickly and for free, and for truly starting an online fitness studio.

If you're looking to truly shift and add to your business offering in the now and the future, here are the things you may be overlooking that will help lead to your success!

Systems truly are the answer to your recovery (because recovery will come!).

Remember, those who PREPARE and PLAN will have the success desired in the recovery that will eventually come!

4 Overall Steps to Systems that Work:

1. Make sure you have a clearly defined STRUCTURE for offering your services, products and offerings (online or not!)
2. AUTOMATE everything you can
3. Whether it's now or in the future, don't forget to plan for when you can MONETIZE your offering
4. If you build it, they may or may not come now or in the future, but PROMOTE as if you were launching a brand new studio!

Considering adding streaming your classes as part of your systems? Going "online" takes more than just converting to a digital studio!

Here are some next steps depending on how you would like to grow your business in the future:

- **Don't just rush to go online...** decide if this is a short term or long term transition for you! It's imperative that you think through your recovery and the future health of your business.
- **In the short term,** focus on creating videos you love and connecting with people in your online community. Again, there's no rush! I've worked with clients for many years who took their studios digital and in order to do it right, it takes proactivity, planning and implementing the right systems from the beginning so you have a quality offering that you can monetize in the long term.
- **If you have videos, but no audience:** look for opportunities to get more views, connect with people in your content niche, and ask what people would like to see.
- **You have an audience, but they're not engaged:** survey your community to find out how you could improve or what you can offer digitally; also look to improve the quality of your videos and see if there's an opportunity to create more engaging content that leads to discussion and conversation.
- **You have an engaged audience, but you don't have the time, energy, or knowledge to market to them:** take the time right now to offer what you have for free. At the same time, start planning for how you can automate and monetize your content in the future (it's all about recovery!).
- **If you're stuck on trying to decide which platform is best for you:** the broad answer is 'it depends!' The truth is there are many platforms that could work, but if you're serious about offering videos on demand or live streaming in the future, I've seen best practices with only a few companies that are offering this. Here is a breakdown of what to look for based on the big players:

	uscreen	Vimeo OTT	MAZ System	Zype	Muvi	Dacast	Intellivideo
Video website	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
OTT apps for mobile and TV devices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Pricing model	Fixed monthly plans	Revenue share model	Fixed monthly plans	Fixed monthly plans	Fixed monthly plans	Fixed monthly plans	15% revenue share
No hidden fees	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Payout	Instant	30 days	Through app stores only	Instant	30 days	Instant	30 days
Free migration	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Free trial	✓ 14 days	✗	✗	✗	✓ 14 days	✓	✓
Included video hosting and streaming	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fully white-labelled design	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓

Finally, a few ideas to help you to build a long-term digital content strategy that will last through and beyond this crisis:

- **Never pay revenue share:** That's giving up all of your eventual profit! It may seem easier than paying a flat fee but it's never in your benefit if you're looking to eventually monetize and grow.
- **Always use a platform that allows you to use your own brand, not theirs.** This includes the link/website URL used for your online studio, as well as being able to completely customize your storefront. Fully "white labeling" (a.k.a., using your brand visibly and simply using the back-end technology of the platform to build out your class) your online studio is always the goal for best use of your brand.
- **Seek integration:** It's imperative that you can communicate with your online studio clients in the same platform without having to use external accounts for email, going live, etc.
- **Take advantage of a free trial** (hint:only the best companies offer them!): It speaks volumes to their ease of use and your ability to make this a real business venture moving forward!

BONUS TIP - Don't forget these five areas:

- **Emails/SMS:** Don't forget you can still encourage your community through emails and other communications. Our businesses thrive on community - you can provide so much more than just classes! Use emails or texts for mass communication about closing, opening and everything in between! Just make sure you think these out and respect the inbox.
- **Social Media:** Social media is not just the future, it's an area to set yourselves apart now. You know what you're likely overlooking? How much of a role your social media can play to help your brand, customers and neighborhood. This is the time to re-tool how you are social...it's not just a place to post pretty pictures and your schedule. This is the time to position yourself and the business as truly community focused and most importantly, innovative!
- **Staff:** Are you looking for ways to encourage and engage your staff? You should! After all, they're your first customer. Host online trainings, teach them how to cue or communicate while online (they likely don't have that insight!), be a source of support and you'll build a true dream team for now, in your recovery and for life.
- **Waivers:** Going digital means it's time for a new or updated waiver. Don't leave your business at risk! Some of our clients are using the waiver as a way to get clients covered for taking online classes, and then seamlessly launching them into an encouraging challenge, inviting them to a digital happy hour, and other exciting ways to engage them- make this both fun and functional.
- **Website:** As someone who has built literally thousands of websites for the health, fitness and wellness industry over the last 15 years, trust me when I say: your website is your studio! It's a reflection of your image and vibe but can be so much more! Is it user friendly? Have you updated it recently? Does it present the business accurately to the people who don't know you yet?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



HART Marketing & Communications Inc. was founded by KK Hart, who has over fifteen years of experience in sales, marketing, communications, business strategy and development.

Hart Marketing & Communications works with boutique businesses to represent and brand them with the expertise and prominence of a large company, leading to enhanced customer acquisition, retention and subsequently return on investment.

As a certified consultant with hands on experience as an owner and operator of several industry related businesses herself, KK is passionate to help fellow owners and boutique companies surpass their earning goals. As a renowned, internationally recognized expert, KK has been featured on FOX, Women's Health, TEDx, and many other media.



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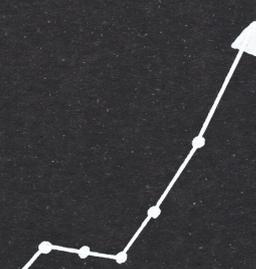
HARDSHIP IS REAL: SCALING YOUR RESPONSE

LISA TAYLOR

OWNER, EVOLUTION POWER YOGA



HARDSHIP IS REAL: Scaling Your Response



Evolution Power Yoga has been in business since 2001, and in the last nearly 20-year period since our opening, we've seen a number of huge challenges, including the aftermath of 9/11 and the 2008 financial disaster.

I've learned a lot over these years, both personally and professionally. Twelve years ago when the global financial crisis hit full force, I was first amazed that everything seemed to be going well...and then surprised by a delayed reaction and revenue drop. I ended up having to do a price drop that lasted two years until I rebuilt. I was not prepared with the experience I now have; I operated from fear and reactivity. In doing so, I did not communicate well when it mattered and with the right people. I felt like I was failing and was ashamed. I did not want to ask for help. What I know now is I am a leader first, a business owner second. Who I am is someone who lives for the health and well-being of others and knows to act from that space.

I am a leader first, a business owner second.

Mine is a yoga studio and our purpose is to create transformations on mats. To do that I cannot react from fear and still be the kind of leader I aspire to be. I have learned to take these steps:

Identify my fears, all of them.

I force myself to think of all fears that cross the back of my mind, both personal and for my business.

Acknowledge the fears of each type of stakeholder in my community:

Staff, instructors, volunteers, students, the other businesses that my business impacts.

Get clear about what is happening right now

Don't let yourself be afraid over the imagined future, or end result. Rather than imagining the worst possible outcome and failure, simply start by taking stock of where things stand now.

- Throughout this process, I have been aware of and clear on the stages of how I will respond to my stakeholders (landlord, clients, etc.) and when. What is required of me and of my business at the present moment has been different than a full scale fear-based reaction.
- Has my attendance changed? This is the baseline indicator of everything. If so, how can I serve my people in a different way than I am now? I force myself to think of all fears that cross the back of my mind, both personal and for my business.

Ask this question: What is there to do right now?

This is often quite different than the fear-based, blind reaction. Though simple, it is often exactly the right question to ask when you're overwhelmed. Here are some ideas:

- Make a list of five things you can do right now to evolve your business in a different direction.
- What are the three things you need to do right now to communicate with your team and clients?
- What are two things in my control right now and how can I action on them?

Mr. Rogers famously shared his mother's advice to him when he was afraid:

“ Look for the helpers

I tend to isolate when I'm afraid or feel out of control. In this space, I'm unable to see who is right there, ready to offer me assistance and have historically viewed receiving help as a weakness. I have learned to listen and hear the need of the giver to give. From the challenges of 2008, I know no one ever really does anything alone, and in the context of today's Covid-19 crisis, those helpers might be a friend who has connections and can give me a heads up when Small Business Loans are being offered, my accounting company who is offering webinars, friends in the industry...

Communicate with specificity. Vagueness gets vague results. This is the big one. When you get past the fear and get a clear list of what resources you have and what you need, people can help you. I never asked my landlord to help me in 2008. I never even revealed I was having difficulty. This time is different: I have a plan and I will reach out to my landlord (asking, for example, to amortize the coming month's rent into the life of the lease so I can stay in business), and to my creditors and any other bill collectors, to ask for some relief. I know now that not only is this ok, but it's the experienced business woman in me asking, not the fearful or isolated woman. Somehow, that gives me the confidence and courage to act with purpose.

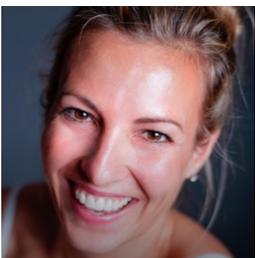
When I need to, I **adjust my attitude**. I do it as often as needed, anytime I slip into a disempowering space. It can be easy to get stuck inside of “this should not be.” Any time spent in this space is in effect a blame game, and, to be honest, a total waste of resources.

Instead, Work with what is. This is where you are powerful and can shape results. Stay in the place of clarity and creation. If you stay in a negative, woe-is-me headspace, you won't see or hear the opportunities and the help around you from this space.

Hardship is real, it happens...and most importantly, it does not define you, or your business. Be responsible for the energy you are generating and sharing. Be the supportive space, the grounded space, the place where people know they are safe.

Leaders are defined in the face of challenges.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Lisa Taylor began Evolution Power Yoga 20 years ago. Long before boutique fitness studios or yoga was prevalent in large cities, Lisa was convincing the small town of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, it needed yoga. Faced with picketing and protests opposing the introduction of a yoga studio, a singular focus to creating transformations on mats paved the way for the Evolution Power Yoga of today.

A marketing major in college and early sales experience helped forge the way to success. For many years and still today, Lisa travels and teaches with her mentor and teacher, Baron Baptiste. She has helped to create and deliver the programs of Baptiste Yoga, The Africa Yoga Project, and the Baptiste Foundation to thousands.

The Evolution Power Yoga brand is comprised of four studio locations with 65 teachers, 115 power vinyasa classes each week and a million in annual gross sales. Aim to Empower is Evolution Power Yoga's non-profit arm, bringing the tools of yoga to those in the community who otherwise would not have access. Evolution's free access to live yoga classes has reached over 72 countries. A new online studio platform, Evolution Go, is expanding Evolution Power Yoga's online reach to the world with professionally filmed subscription video content.



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CAN LIVE-STREAMING SAVE YOUR BUSINESS?

NT ETUK

FOUNDER & CEO, FITGRID



Can Live-Streaming Save Your Business?

Are you grappling with whether live-streaming is a worthwhile investment of your time?



The industry is in crisis mode. The decisions that you make now and what you choose to spend your time on can determine whether your business lives or dies. So, can live-streaming save your business?

The short answer is – quite possibly.

Some of you may already be doing it and some may not have thought of it. To help you decide whether to invest time going there (and perhaps to reassure you if you already have), here are eight reasons I think it makes sense:

- 1 SIMPLICITY & KEEPING YOUR EXISTING REVENUE STREAM
- 2 AUTHENTICITY
- 3 IT'S GREAT FOR A SPECIFIC TYPE OF CLIENT
- 4 FLEXIBILITY
- 5 COMMUNITY
- 6 NEW PROGRAMMING
- 7 NEW REVENUE
- 8 YOU NEED THIS FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

SIMPLICITY & KEEPING YOUR EXISTING REVENUE STREAM

Studios have long talked about moving virtual. Those with the resources have developed streaming models that allow them to push content from their studios for a monthly subscription price, or they have created paywalls that keep recorded sessions of their content behind internet locks that only their members can access. However, most of the businesses that have been able to do that have been planning it for months, if not years.

If we all had resources, that's what we might do ... but most of us don't. And most of us are scrambling in a game-changing scenario that none of us could have predicted.

As a result, the simplest and fastest way to help your business survive is to shift your existing classes to streaming and implore your customers to support you while you figure out the rest.

This approach has a few benefits:

- It staunches some of the bleeding immediately
- Most of your regular members want to support you and will
- This can tie your community together creating a bond that can help you get through this
- You can keep your existing prices and set-up, at least in the short term
- You don't have to master a whole new business model
- It delays, for at least a few weeks, an exodus of clients, giving you crucial time to master the format, shift your mindset, and plot your next moves

AUTHENTICITY

Ever heard of Tik Tok or Instagram Stories? These platforms provide a world of selfies and authentic video – and they work. Your videos do not have to have the slick Hollywood production quality you had imagined for your studio right now.

We are in a disaster situation! Your clients are in a disaster situation!

Do you think they want something that looks like it came off the lot of Warner Bros.? No! They want something that's just as gritty as their situation is. Personally, I'm not sure that perspective will go away, even after the crisis. Personality and authenticity are in.

IT'S GREAT FOR A SPECIFIC TYPE OF CLIENT

Some clients may care about amazing video and sound quality. Some may need your production to sound like the last season of American Idol. Some might care that the instructors have great stage presence and are always aware of the camera and glance at it from time to time.

I, personally, don't.

Most of the time my instructors don't have the time during class to acknowledge that I'm there. It's rare when one looks my way, besides checking my form, generally. Still, I have a favorite studio. I even have favorite instructors. The studio is around 20 minutes away from me and the classes I can get to, given my schedule, are early in the morning, so when there's a heavy work day, I just can't get there. When I'm motivated I do a jog or hit the treadmill in my apartment building, but would I rather be doing my favorite workout? Absolutely. Do I care that the video is 4D quality? Absolutely not. It just has to be visible enough for me to be able to follow the movements and clear enough that I can hear. I'm there for the cadence, for the method, for the instructor, for the routine. Give me that and I'm good to go. When I want the full experience, I'll go in person.

Now, I am a specific type of client – a little more of a regular – and a lot more interested in the substance than the form. However, I assure you – there are many like me. So for studio owners out there who are looking to supplement revenue but don't want to make video a core competency, know that there is a whole group of clients (with a slightly different perspective) you could be serving that you might not have paid attention to before, but whom you can pay attention to now.

FLEXIBILITY

Live-streaming allows you to be flexible with your costs. You can have all of your instructors do it. You can have some instructors do it. You can scale back completely and only do it yourself. However, what I will emphasize is that the decision around what you should do shouldn't come from only a concern about the expense.

The main goal is to keep your clients fully engaged.

If they are engaged they will pay. If they pay, you have a business, and you have flexibility. So what does that? Is it just you, streaming all day? Is it a few of your instructors? Is it all of them? Only you know the answer to that question. Play with it a little and see what happens.

COMMUNITY

This can be a time to get your clients to bond with you. Depending on the streaming solution, you can have clients see each other (as well as the instructor) in class.

It's one of the reasons why FitGrid chose Zoom as a solution partner. In Zoom, there is "Gallery Mode" which allows people to see each other. While we can't get together in a room, we can certainly simulate that, which can be just as good. And if it's a bad hair day for someone? Well, that person can turn the camera off and, frankly, keep it to themselves.

In any case, there's something about visually seeing your instructor – seeing him or her there with you; hearing them exhort you to try more, to go harder, to sweat or meditate out your fear or frustration.

It's powerful.

And if you choose the right instructors, this bond that begins to happen can pull your clients right through to the other side of this crisis.

NEW PROGRAMMING

Guess what? It's never been so inexpensive to test new content! Throw up an **Experimental Class: Couch Yoga**. Ask whoever signs up to give you feedback. We've always been so concerned about losing existing clients by experimenting with new programming because it takes slots in our precious schedules. However, we rarely think about how you can keep an in-person schedule but use live-streaming to create tiny little Petri dishes for new content. Now we're forced into it.

Some of you (cycling studios, etc.) may be forced to develop different content during this time, but it can be content that complements being on the bike and that can even live as permanent additions to your schedule once things are back in order. For those whose content can fit perfectly (yoga, mat pilates, dance), you're lucky. However, you can still experiment. Try adding Nt's Vinyasa Yoga to your schedule. It's the bomb! (I'm kidding. I'm Nt. Please don't go searching the web for Nt Vinyasa :))

But seriously, take this time to develop all the content that's going to make you blow up when things come back around!

NEW REVENUE

Yessss! New revenue! Does your studio have a reputation in your community, but people simply can't get to it at a convenient time, or your classes sell out in the prime time slots?

Create additional classes online. These revenue streams can come at very little additional cost. For example, you can stream a class from your living room (yes, yes, we'll talk about brand a little later) and those who like it join and those who don't, don't.

YOU NEED THIS FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Honestly, we all need to feel like there is something we can do instead of just letting circumstances take a hold of us. We need space and time to think. Moving quickly on live-streaming – especially if it's in a way that is semi-automated and minimizes your needed investment in the technical aspect (see [FitGrid's solution](#) and hopefully other solutions that are being created out there) can help you feel a little more in control while you figure the rest out.

WHAT ABOUT MY BRAND?

I get it. In-person, you produce extremely high-quality content with extremely high-quality sound. You're known for that and you take pride in it. You want whatever you put out there to be an extension of your brand.

Think of live-streaming (and honestly even recorded products) as a new business. When you started your business were you in the perfect location? Did you have the perfect instructors? Did you have to build an audience that accepted it for what it was and grew with it? Of course, you did.

This is no different. Enroll your clients in the journey with you. **This situation gives you the perfect excuse to be imperfect.** Everyone understands. Start small, and as you become more comfortable with it, invest more. Remember that this is a different type of client who will be drawn to this, and remember that live-streaming does not imply cheap. You can do it at a low-cost level or a very high-cost level.

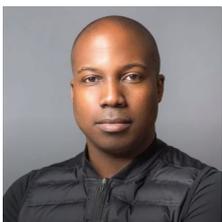
IN SUMMARY

There is no question we are in a crisis. The human toll COVID-19 is taking and will continue to take on us is likely to be devastating.

On a personal level, we will hurt. On a business level, we will hurt as well, but we aren't defenseless. We have assets – ourselves, our clients, our instructors, our methods, our energy. We may need to shift them to another medium for now, but sometimes that's just life and business.

Remain flexible. Remain strong. Remain together. You can do this. We're with you all the way.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Nt Etuk is the Founder & CEO of FitGrid and Co-Founder of BFS. The team at FitGrid has been working around the clock to create a simple, more automated live-stream solution [FitGrid LIVE](#) – that automatically connects Zoom and MINDBODY, for group fitness studios, in response to the crisis hitting the industry.



**Boutique
Fitness 
Solutions**

REQUEST FOR RENT ABATEMENT

DAVID WEST & BFS

MANAGING DIRECTOR, REAL ESTATE, INTEGRITY SQUARE





Request for Rent Abatement

A NOTE FROM DAVID WEST Managing Director, Real Estate, Integrity Square

I strongly suggest negotiating with your Landlord utilizing a very sensitive approach, as they too are going to be deeply involved in the resolution in the end, which will come from local/national governing agencies. The approach I use with my clients is a very friendly/open/candid conversation with the Landlord to address the current situation. Provide as much empirical data in relation to utilization rates, rent to revenue ratios, current market conditions.

Date

Name

Title

Company

Street

City, State, Zip Code

Re: Account # _____

Dear _____,

As you know, my company, **[INSERT COMPANY NAME]**, is a tenant in your building located at _____ and I am writing to provide you with an update on our financial position so that we can work together proactively to find a solution that is mutually beneficial for both of us.

For the last six months of 2019, **[NAME OF COMPANY]**'s average monthly gross revenues were \$_____ and for the first ten (10) weeks of this year, our average weekly gross revenues were \$_____.

Since Mayor/Governor of **[INSERT CITY OR STATE]** issued a State of Emergency and/or ordered the closing of all gyms on **[INSERT DATE]** and President Donald J. Trump declared a State of Emergency on March 13, 2020 and recommended a policy of Social Distancing, **[NAME OF COMPANY]**'s weekly gross revenues have [declined/ceased] to \$_____. Furthermore, some officials in the federal, state, and local governments have recommended citizens to be prepared to operate under the current conditions for another six (6) months.

If the current business environment remains the norm for more than thirty (30) days, **[NAME OF COMPANY]** will be unable to pay its monthly rent of \$_____ and therefore, I am requesting a rent abatement, deferral or other relief for the duration of the confinement laws that are currently being imposed by **[INSERT CITY OR STATE]**.

Please let me know when you are available to discuss this urgent matter with me.

Thank you.

Name

Title

Company



**Boutique
Fitness 
Solutions**

DISASTER RELIEF RESOURCES

COMPILED BY BFS



SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

NATIONWIDE

- [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) - Loan Assistance

NEW YORK

- [NYC Small Business Services](#) - Assistance for Businesses Impacted by COVID-19
- [Employee Retention Grant Program](#) - up to 40% payroll grant

ILLINOIS

- [IL Dept. of Commerce](#) - COVID-19 Impact Form

CALIFORNIA

- [Disaster Loan Assistance](#) - Federal Disaster Loan

UNEMPLOYMENT (For Employers)

NATIONWIDE

- [BeneStream](#) - Unemployment Insurance Savings (reduce UI tax liabilities)

NEW YORK

- [Shared Work Program](#) - Employees receive partial UI benefits while working reduced hours

CALIFORNIA

- [Employment Law Report](#) - What you need to know during these times

UNEMPLOYMENT (For Employees)

NEW YORK

- Waiting Period Waived - 7 day waiting period waived for UI Benefits

ILLINOIS

- Unemployment Benefits - Who/how/when to apply in IL

CALIFORNIA

- Waiting Period Waived - 7 day waiting period waived for UI Benefits

TAX RELIEF

NATIONWIDE

- Personal Tax Payments Deferred for 90 Days

NEW YORK

- NYC Finance Dept Sales Tax - Must be filed as scheduled, but can request a deferment

CALIFORNIA

- Extension Granted - Check for personal and business due dates

OTHER RESOURCES

NATIONWIDE

- [Facebook Small Business Grants for COVID-19](#)
- [CitiBank Account Assistance](#)
- [Other Banks offering Account Assistance](#)
- [Car Payment Assistance](#)
- [Comcast Offers 60 Days of Free Internet](#)
- [AT&T Suspends Data Caps](#)
- [FCC asks Companies not to Terminate Services](#)
- [Artist Assistance Resources](#) - For instructors also involved in the performing arts
- [Tenant Protection during COVID-19](#)

NEW YORK

- [MTA - Ride for Half Price](#)
- [NYC Halts Evictions for 3 Months](#)
- [NY Suspends Collection of Medical and Student Debt](#)

THIS IS A PARTIAL LIST OF RESOURCES THAT WILL BE UPDATED
CONTINUALLY.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES & INFORMATION CAN ALSO BE FOUND IN THE
COVID-19 RESOURCE LIBRARY ON OUR WEBSITE.

TOP 4 WAYS VIDEO CAN SAVE YOUR FITNESS BUSINESS

AND HELP IT THRIVE
AFTERWARDS

WORKS WITH



SIGN UP FOR WEBINAR HERE

LEARN MORE



INTELIVIDEO

YOUR VIDEO ON DEMAND PARTNER

www.intelivideo.com

BOUTIQUEFITNESS
SOLUTIONS.COM

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

Your support makes it possible for BFS to provide this Playbook complimentary to our industry.

PRESENTING PARTNER



PLATINUM PARTNER



DATA PARTNER



DIAMOND PARTNERS





PROTECTING **BOUTIQUE FITNESS** AT THE MOST CRITICAL TIMES

COVID-19 RESOURCE LIBRARY

Visit the COVID-19 Resource Library from our homepage menu to find a continually updated library of resources from reputable webinars, to 1:1 support, to loan information.

[VISIT HERE](#)

BFS[™] Academy

The BFS Academy is your go to library of OnDemand Classes taught by BFS Faculty Members and addressing topics such as retention, acquisition, operations, and management..

[DETAILS COMING SOON](#)

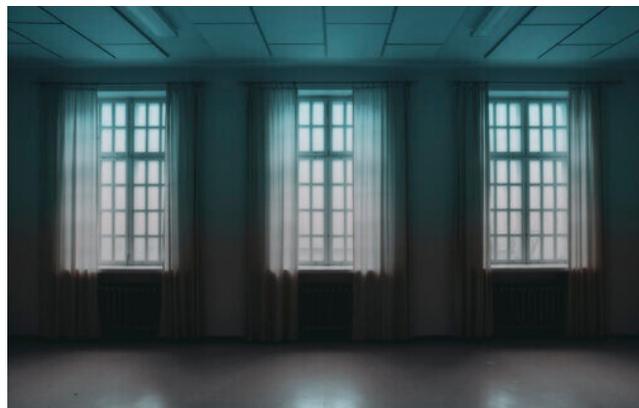


ROXY BERGER

/ FOUNDER, LIBERATE CONSULTING
MBO CERTIFIED CONSULTANT

May We Turn Lemons Into Lemonade

This is not an easy time to be a small business, is it? As if it isn't always hard enough, day in and day out. I want my studio leader friends to know I am here for you and with you in all the ways I can be. You can and will survive this and it is my true hope for you that you find a way to grow and expand from this challenge. Maybe not today, but eventually. Here are three ways I suggest you can try to make the most of a forced studio closure, downtime that is more than you've dealt with before, unplanned, but CAN be utilized to help your business long term.



MINIMIZE EXPENSES

Ok, so if you are closing for a period of time, at least one of your biggest expenses, payroll, will be decreased. Your employees have lots of resources regarding unemployment and family leave right now, send them links to resources from your local state/gov.

**SEE LISE KUECKER'S
ARTICLE & DISASTER
RELIEF RESOURCES FOR
MORE**

SEE RENT ABATEMENT LETTER

Where else can you minimize expenses? Turn off the heat, cancel any upcoming purchase orders that you can, check on insurance discounts, etc. I would go through my entire list of regular expenses and see where I can defer, minimize, cancel for at least a month. You can and should ask for breaks on rent as well.

GET CREATIVE

Can you find ways to still make money during this time?

- Could you offer your studio for rent to private teachers to create online content?
- Can you create your own virtual offerings?
- What if you offered members some kind of perks for staying on membership, i.e. give them a private session via zoom, 5 video classes only available to them, and some kind of long term perks for staying dedicated.
- If members must cancel, we could offer gift cards, or perhaps some different levels of membership hold fees with "in-kind" donation options.

**SEE KK HART
& FITGRIDS ARTICLES
FOR MORE ON LIVE STREAMING**

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX HERE.

WORK ON SOMETHING NEW

This is a great time to spend some time and energy on something completely new, that could bring in new revenue for you and your business down the road; something that might be too time consuming or intimidating for you normally.

For example, my first yoga teacher training program offered was a completely new revenue stream at my studio, brought in an additional \$40k in revenue the first time I offered it. It took me a couple months of writing descriptions, submitting to Yoga Alliance, getting the website updated, planning schedules, getting teachers aligned to teach it, creating good content and notes, setting it up to market and sell online. That is all work I had to make time for during normal business life. I did most of the work in the summer, when it was a little less busy, and I even had to give up some regular teaching engagements to ensure I had enough time to work on the project.

What kind of project have you been thinking might be a new, maybe even a “*blue ocean strategy*” for you, that you haven’t been making the time for? Now might be the time. I am working on my own online course. Perhaps you can take the time for your own continuing education & marketing planning for when you can reopen. I love hiking and listening to business books. This could also be a good time to spend time on the important, but not urgent tasks you might normally avoid. I know a lot of studio owners avoid the Numbers...I know, spreadsheets and numbers can be extra scary at a time like this. Yet, you have time, why not get the real story of your last year of reality, make realistic projections as to what might be your reality for the next few months and how you can make it work. Use this time to make a plan to RISE UP like the phoenix you are in the coming years!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

On a mission to help businesses thrive, Roxanne (Roxy) Borger has worked with boutique fitness businesses for more than 15 years. Borger co-created MINDBODY University (Wellness Business Intensives) and the MINDBODY-Certified Business Consultant Program, both of which successfully have helped thousands of businesses enhance viability and profitability since 2006. Borger’s also a self-taught entrepreneur who accomplished her dream of owning a yoga studio, which she ran effectively for five years. She aims to be the business-partner-friend-adviser she so desperately needed while running her studio on a shoestring budget. Borger tenaciously survives bootcamps and motherhood in San Luis Obispo, CA, while also sharing the knowledge she’s gained at industry events, webinars and conferences.

HOMEWORK FOR THE TEACHER

The differences between recorded or streaming fitness and brick and mortar is more than just logistical.

Success in the digital space also requires a different approach and pedagogy on the part of the instructor. Here are the questions you need to answer for your instructors to compete in this new space:



How many ways is teaching a charismatic, energy-filled live class a COMPLETELY different environment than recorded classes on demand for retail membership??

How is streaming live classes a COMPLETELY different animal, with commonalities to the recorded and edited fitness game AND live classes? What separates, makes, or breaks these experiences from the competition, while keeping some of the flavor of the in-person experience alive?

What are the key 5 do's and don'ts for BOTH of these scenarios? Where do they overlap?

What are the most important aspects of VIDEO-DRIVEN METHODOLOGY EDUCATION that will allow teachers to stay current from remote locations, stay on brand and on message, if they are uploading community exercise videos for the studio?

What does an on-camera presenter/fitness talent need to be able to do well that a live trainer or instructor doesn't need to concern themselves with?
