



## Straight Thoughts, Straight Talk

*"Serving Andersen Alumni Worldwide"*

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### Editorial

So here we are, four weeks in the Great Corona shutdown. As business leaders we are faced with yet another “once in a lifetime” economic crisis. These crises seem to be coming with alarming regularity. The silver lining of working through these events is you gain experience and can develop a playbook on how to execute.

This is my third crisis that seemed unprecedented at the time; 9-11, The Great Recession and now the Corona virus pandemic. I learned a lot from the prior events. I learned the importance of cash and liquidity. I learned how to shed costs at an alarming rate. I even learned how to look for opportunity in the midst of chaos. However, there is one action that I almost took for granted but has proven to be one of the most important, if not critical, actions to prepare the company for the post crisis environment. That one item is culture management.

I would argue that an extreme crisis is the ultimate test of company’s culture. It is easy to justify all kinds of actions in a desperate attempt to save the company. While many of those actions are necessary, you can do it within the context of your company’s culture. Let me be clear, I am coming from a place of companies with strong, employee centric cultures. You may very well have a different culture. In any event, while you may not be looking for one more thing to do, now is the perfect time to change your culture or reinforce the one you have already developed.

There is one play in the crisis playbook, that I think is critical. That is play is communication. You are not alone in feeling the stress brought about by the crisis. Your employees, partners or teammates feel the very same stress. I have always tried to create an open and transparent culture. This is easy when things are going well. However, it is

in time like these I have to remind myself to double down on openness and transparency. While that does not mean you are able to telegraph specific actions, you can present the scenarios by which certain actions will be necessary. Employees are smart. They can anticipate certain actions. Giving them a framework by which those actions may occur will provide a sense of order and in turn build trust.

I tend to work in professional service companies. This means payroll costs are the primary expense of the company. Everyone knows that. At the end of the day, the only way to reduce expenses is to reduce payroll costs, not necessarily payroll. To keep it simple I will communicate a green, yellow, red scenario. If we operate in these parameters, we will take the following actions. If things get worse, yellow, we will take the following actions. If things continue to get worse, red light, we will do what it takes to save the company and will take the following actions. Lay these parameters out there. Keep the employees aware of which status you are in and equally important which way you are trending. The key is no surprises. They probably already know the situation and if not, given the absence of communication, they will fear the worst,

Now is the time to double down on the culture you want for your company. This crisis can accelerate you towards the culture you want or can reinforce the one you have. In any event, it is one of the key elements, just like cash flow and the safety of your employees, that you will have to navigate during this once in a lifetime crisis.

As always, we need your help to further strengthen and maintain our Andersen Alumni network. Please leverage our Social Media Presence and [LIKE our Facebook page](#) and [JOIN our LinkedIn network](#), and lastly you can [FOLLOW us on LinkedIn](#) as well.

Sincerely,  
Kirk Hancock  
Editor

## Top 50 Tech Services CEOs of 2020

Congratulations to the following Andersen Alumni for making The Software Report's [Top 50 Tech Services CEOs of 2020](#)

- #5. [Laila Worrell](#) at [Altran](#)
- #8. [Monty Hamilton](#) at [Rural Sourcing](#)
- #14. [Justin Bell](#) at [Credera](#)
- #15. [Sara Stanley Hale](#) at [Coastal Cloud](#)
- #17. [Chris Michalak](#) at [Alight Solutions](#)
- #28. [Sunil Bhatia](#) at [Infogain](#)
- #44. [Kelly Manthey](#) at [Kin + Carta](#)
- #46. [David Joubran](#) at [Acumen Solutions](#)

# Andersen Alumni on the Move

+ [Follow](#) us on our LinkedIn Company Page for the latest information on fellow alumni on the move. Below is a list of Alumni that made recent career moves. If you have recently changed jobs and would like to share your good news with other Alumni, please email details to [Admin@andersenalumni.com](mailto:Admin@andersenalumni.com) Please wish these Alumni best in their new ventures.



[Bill Comeau](#)  
[Pam Murphy](#)  
[Liz Huebner](#)  
[Gary Watkins](#)  
[Monique Ruiz](#)  
[Chris Castaldo](#)  
[David Walker](#)

[Wes Winnekins](#)  
[Dave Swinehart](#)  
[Will Porter](#)  
[Chad Kolean](#)  
[William Kelley](#)  
[Bob Frenzel](#)  
[Jonathan Zoelleron](#)

[Brad Schomber](#)  
[Ellen Sample](#)  
[Rick Arpin](#)  
[Tony Alveraz](#)  
[Kelly Janzen](#)  
[Steven Gargano](#)

[Ken Trammell](#)  
[Kathy Willard](#)  
[Becky Sheehan](#)  
[Lance Berry](#)  
[Pete Carlson](#)  
[Jim Lightsey](#)

## Recession Proof Your Career

By Maggie Mistal, *Arthur Andersen Business Consulting 1995-2002*

Reading and watching news stories about coronavirus, one could get anxious. Companies are limiting travel, conferences are being cancelled, factories are operating at low capacity, the stock market is "correcting, and the Federal reserve is cutting rates to stave off recession. Analysts are warning that the virus could "slow economic growth for some time."(Source: [LinkedIn](#).)

**Besides health concerns, you may be wondering what all of this could mean to you, your job and your stability.**

If you're concerned a recession could impact your career but aren't sure what to do about it, the good news is that you don't just have to wait and see. Rather than brace yourself, consider other important actions you could be taking. To that end, I'm sharing part one of my 3-part series so you can be strategic, prepared and proactive in recession proofing your career.

## **Step 1: Get in The Know – Understand how your employer, industry, department and job might be impacted.**

- Read company website and email updates not just about coronavirus but about current and potential impacts to company performance, policy changes and increases or decreases to customer pipelines.
- You can also proactively set up Google alerts for your employer and top competitors. And sign up for industry newsletters for the latest information from associations in your field.
- Ask your manager or mentor for information and his/her thoughts on the impacts and find out areas of concern.
- If your employer is a publicly traded company, listen to the latest analysts calls where the CEO and other executives give updates about company performance, concerns about threats and what's being done to address and minimize risk.

As Marie Curie said, “Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.” Don't just sit in fear and wait to see what happens. Be proactive in understanding the potential impacts to your career both negative and positive, and you'll be able to prepare yourself to address them.

## **Step 2: Don't panic - The key is to have the proper mindset.**

It's hard to think clearly or creatively when you're fearful. So, take a deep breath, calm down and regain perspective. Necessity is the mother of invention. Rather than be afraid of a virus spread, a [stock market drop](#) and/or possible recession, imagine all this is happening to help you and your career.

**What if the challenges were actually a blessing in disguise? What positive outcome could you ideally see happening as a result of this situation? Here are a few to consider:**

- **Promotion.** - If your employer is in healthcare, then the current situation could be a boon to profits. This may give you the chance to take on added responsibility or lead and develop a new team. But if your employer is in travel, this could mean a slowdown. Either way, there's always a chance for you to shine. Case in point, recently United airlines suspended change fees for the month of March. This policy change freed up travelers to book tickets and not lose out if their event or function is cancelled. Whomever came up with the idea now has a great win for their next performance review/promotion. How might you pick up the slack or apply innovative thinking to the opportunities and challenges your company is facing? Don't worry if it's not your job to come up with these ideas. Let your mind focus on inspiration rather than fear. It may help the company and position you to move up the ladder.
- **More work/life flexibility and/or time off.** - Many employers are allowing employees especially in Asia, to work from home. If you've not been given flexibility in the past, this is your chance to demonstrate how productive you are

working remotely. It also gives you the opportunity to pilot a virtual approach and see how it works or doesn't work for you. Will you feel isolated or will you love the lack of office distractions? Now you can find out. And if, heaven forbid, you do get sick, this is a chance to take a much-needed rest. In response to concerns about virus spread, many companies are offering expanded sick day allowances as noted in this recent article about [how HR Leaders are preparing for coronavirus](#).

- **New skills to boost your resume.** - You may find your meeting is not being conducted in person but rather via video conference. This is your chance to learn how to present effectively on a virtual stage/screen, interact with your audience using technology and get feedback by watching a recording of yourself presenting. You may also find your role requires setting up technology associated with a virtual experience or coming up with new ways to get work done virtually. Again, you'll have to learn quick but these new skills and experiences will be something you can add to your resume.

### **Step 3: Find your opportunity in crisis.**

It's a scary question to consider but what would you do if you lost your job due to a recession? Would you get another job in same line of work or make a career change? Situations like this, though very challenging, can be a catalyst for change to doing work you love. To start, I find it's helpful to start with Soul Search and assess your purpose. It helps you get real sense for your priorities and what meaningful work looks like for you.

**To define your purpose, try this exercises I use with my coaching clients as part of their [Soul Search, Research and Job Search](#):**

1. **Start with actions you LOVE taking.** Reflect on happier times in your career when you enjoyed your work, success came easily, and you felt in the flow. What actions were you taking then? Were you leading, editing, teaching, creating, communicating or some other action? Right them down.
2. **Think about what you want your life to stand for.** What above all makes life worth living? Why do you get up every morning? What do you want to fix in the world? Is there a quality you'd like to see more of in others? Your main focus may be providing for your family, making a difference for a cause you care about, or simply becoming a better person than you were yesterday. Whatever you care most about, it's important to be honest with yourself. If you stand for integrity but work in an industry you don't believe in, then your life really doesn't stand for integrity. The outside needs to match what's inside. Write down what you truly want to be remembered for.
3. **Who or what are you here to serve?** A purposeful life is one where you are of service to those groups, causes or fields that matter to you. And times of concern or crisis can highlight who or what we want to serve. I know a physician who decided as a little girl that she would become a doctor so she could be of service to her family in the event of an emergency, Perhaps you can see yourself on the front lines with knowledge and experience to help those in need in a different way. If you're not sure, think of who thanks you and for what. Write that down.

Putting all 3 of these together you get your purpose statement. Use this as your compass or guiding light as you take the next steps to research career possibilities that align with your purpose. (For a great example, stay tuned for my upcoming [podcast](#) episode featuring a young woman making a positive impact in the sport of racing using her purpose as a compass, it's even the name of her non-profit.)

After research confirms your compass is steering you in a direction where you can make a great living, the last step is to job search. I've found that networking leads to the best-fit jobs and recently highlighted the success story of a job seeker who created 2 new job opportunities, countless freelance gigs and added 400 quality contacts to his network with this [better way to job search](#).

Maybe this crisis is your catalyst for change. If so, doing a Soul Search or gut check is a great use of your newfound free time. It's in these moments of challenge that you can reflect most clearly on your [core genius](#) and then Research and Job Search to find your opportunities in crisis.

*"While it may come as a profound surprise to those of us who are in the throes of an emotional or life crisis, the fact remains that the answer to virtually all of our problems resides within us already. It exist in the form of a vast reservoir of free-flowing energy that, when channeled to our muscles, can give us great strength and, when channeled to our brain, can give us great insight and understanding." - Bruce Lee*





**18 years ago, my employer (Arthur Andersen) was in crisis because of the Enron debacle. No one knew what was going to happen to our jobs, but we knew the future of the firm looked bleak. During this time, I took the opportunity to reflect on my own purpose and got certified as a life purpose and career coach. That crisis turned into opportunity for me to do the work I was meant for and this crisis can turn into opportunity for you to do the same. Take it. This is your time.**

For more advice on how to find a recession proof job, check out my [how-to career videos](#). To recession proof your career you've got to keep your head and maintain the proper mindset during challenging situations. It helps to remember the wise saying of "this too shall pass." Staying focused and productive in this manner will set you apart from others who are merely reacting to what's happening. You will instead have a career story that demonstrates your abilities to proactively manage and shape a situation to minimize risk but to also add value. [Contact me](#) if you'd like support turning around your own situation.

# Thinking Straight Talking Straight in Unusual Times

By Ed Maier, *Former Andersen Partner*

Years ago, when Arthur Andersen folded up shop and I had to do something different than I had done for thirty-four years, I was nervous, apprehensive and sometimes even scared. I wanted to engage in work that would help others grow and develop, but I did not have any formal training in that arena. After thinking about it a good deal, I kept coming back to the primary tenet I learned from my first day at Arthur Andersen – “Think Straight. Talk Straight”. And over time, I have been successful in using that principle to help guide me as I have worked with others and led my life.

In that span of time, I been privileged to correspond with you through this newsletter. I have shared my thinking on different topics and many of you responded with your own thoughts. I struggled to develop a message this quarter because we are, indeed, in “unusual times”. So, I decided to go back to this fundamental principle. I hope this is helpful to you.

As you deal with the new issues you face in your personal and professional lives as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, here are my thoughts to help you think straight and talk straight.

## Think Straight--

**Gather and understand the facts.** When faced with this, or any other problem, assemble the relevant facts to help you think about it and make your decisions. Verify those facts as much as possible and in the time allowed. Make your decisions based on the facts as you understand them. But be cautious as you gather your data. Rely on sources that you trust. A huge amount of information is disseminated to us from a variety of sources. Make sure you are comfortable with the sources on which you rely.

**Understand the context.** The same facts may have different meaning in a different context. Facts and information that you obtain in any crisis can vary or be “spun” depending on the source. Try to verify the sources of your information by comparing them to multiple other sources on which you feel you can rely. Many business, political and medical leaders and professionals are delivering messages to you. Filter them according to your trust level and experience. Understand the context in which they are delivering their messages as you take heed of them. Context counts.

**Avoid noise and fluff.** There is always a great deal of “noise” in the system, even more so today. Try to eliminate the noise from the system; filter through it; throw out the hyperbole. One of the ways I try to do this is only listening to the sources that I trust. I screen new things I hear against the sources that I have comfort with as I attempt to reduce the level of noise coming at me.



**Keep it simple.** Even the most complex facts can be broken down into simpler parts. It tends to clear the air and help focus on what is relevant about the decision or choice you are about to make. Given our mutual affiliation, I presume that most of the readers of this message have strong analytical and data-gathering skills. Be sure to make use of them in times such as these. Break the message complexities down into their simpler parts, analyze for that which is factual and throw out the fluff. Apply the appropriate logical reasoning to the facts you assemble and make your decisions and choices accordingly.

Once you have assembled, analyzed and concluded, it's time to begin talking straight.

### **Talk Straight—**

**Understand Your Audience.** Before you begin speaking, and especially in today's circumstances, understand the person(s) to whom you are speaking. You will conduct a discussion with your family different than a conversation with your boss or your co-workers. Your conversation will be delivered differently to your pre-school and young children and differently to your teenagers and your home-from-college student. The same message will also have to be delivered in a different way to your eighty-year old mother or grandfather or great uncle.

**Tell it like it is.** Explain the facts to your listener, express the context in which you understand the problem or the issue and present your conclusion. Don't sugarcoat your answer, but be respectful of the impact of your conclusion on others. Be honest.

**Keep it simple.** Be brief and to the point. Add facts and context as necessary. Try not to be a "clock-builder". When asked "What time is it?" a "clock-builder" describes how to build a timepiece for the other person rather than just telling them the time of day. Don't build a clock unless someone asks you how to build a clock.

**Ask if you are understood.** Inquire if your listener understands what you have told them. Clarify your message with a few questions to validate their understanding. Two people can look at the same sky, yet one sees it as partly sunny while the other sees it as partly cloudy. In today's environment, two people can look at the same set of pandemic statistics and draw significantly different conclusions from them. How many different interpretations of "sheltering in place" or "social distancing" are there? Make sure you agree on what both of you are hearing. It is often helpful to ask your listener to repeat the message back to you. You can also ask them to restate the message in their own words. Whatever technique you use, it is important to make sure that the listener understands your communication.

**Consider the other's perspective.** Recognize that your listener may not have the same point of view on the issue that you have. People come to conversations with different viewpoints based on their own backgrounds. To "Talk Straight" you must consider them. Then deliver your message succinctly and directly. If in the course of the conversation, you obtain new facts or

additional context, be willing to build them into your own “Think Straight” process. Don’t be afraid to acknowledge that there might be a different answer. Be willing to modify your conclusion. It is certainly acceptable that the two parties in a discussion respectfully disagree as long as that disagreement is truly respectful.

**Be courteous, be respectful, be thankful.** Be thoughtful and polite as you listen to points of view of others. Respect their viewpoint. One of the partners I worked for early in my career was masterful at this. I remember working for him as a brand-new staff assistant. Looking back on some of the mistakes I made, I often wonder how he did not lose patience with me. But he always treated me with respect; he listened to my rather un-intelligent questions; he carefully and thoughtfully explained things to me; he often analogized complex business issues to other concepts that were easier to understand. And he regularly thanked me for my input, even when he did not accept it.

**Manage your emotions.** Control your emotions and recognize you cannot control the emotions of others. Think before you speak. A colleague I worked with several years ago taught me to understand that every event that affects me stimulates my mind to tell me stories. These stories might relate to feelings generate emotions and the emotions result in action. You cannot control the events that happen, but you can control the stories your mind tells you. Control the stories and you can control your emotions and, subsequently, your actions.

Another way to express this I learned from reading Stephen Covey. He said that you should not just immediately react when things happen. Slow down your thinking. Plan your action. Then act. If you apply this line of thinking to events that happen to you before you react to them, you can better control the emotions coming from that event and, generally, take better action.

**Listen --** An extremely important part of thinking straight and talking straight is listening. Once again, I will refer you to Stephen Covey. In his book “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”, Habit #5 was “Seek first to understand, then to be understood”. You cannot possibly be understood without the first step—to understand. Your primary role as a good listener is to understand the facts presented by the other party, the assumptions that they have made in drawing their conclusions about those facts and the emotions or feelings they have about the issues emanating from those fact and emotions.

### **Take Care of Yourself –**

I hope my thoughts help you practice thinking straight and talking straight, especially in these difficult times. But I don’t want to leave this page without this last thought from my own “thinking straight” perspective.

At all times, but especially at times like these, do not forget to take care of yourself. You cannot fulfill your responsibilities to others without fulfilling your responsibilities to yourself. The pressures and stresses you are feeling today are unlike anything you have felt in the past. I have had conversations with and read about others who experienced

what it was like in our country during World War II. People were uncertain about their futures and the futures of their loved ones. But even then, those who did not have to go into battle, did not have concerns about losing their lives. Each of us is dealing with our own set of fears and emotions caused by this pandemic. So each of us needs to be reminded of the importance of taking care of our own physical and mental well-being—first and foremost. Whatever steps you take to help you do that –be it exercise, meditation, prayer or just some “alone time”—please do so regularly and often.

My best to each of you. Stay well. Stay healthy. Stay safe.

As always, I am interested in your thoughts and I would love to hear some of your own. Write me at [ed@thinkstraighttalkstraight.com](mailto:ed@thinkstraighttalkstraight.com).

And, when times settle down again, and they will, there is more of “*Think Straight. Talk Straight.*” available on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

## TED Talk: The Danger of Participation Trophies

**By Jennifer Alessandra, Andersen Alumni and Chief People Officer of Frontdoor, Inc.**

As far back as I can remember, I’ve been attracted to resilience and adaptability. My interest in the human capacity to change, transform and focus in the face of adversity was first cultivated as an athlete. At Arthur Andersen and throughout my professional career, I’ve come to deeply appreciate the personal growth and resilience borne out of hardship, challenge and feedback.

In February 2020, I had the privilege of giving a TED talk on the dangers of participation trophies. The notion that failure produces resilience, and the belief that participation trophies undermine personal growth, was applicable at the time I gave the talk. Yet, it was not pressing. Now, it’s urgent!

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is a new challenge, globally; we are writing the play book as we go and learning along the way. Our society will transform, innovate and change because of this experience. We have each been faced with difficult situations to work through in our lives, including 2002, when many of us were working at Andersen. Resilience is picking oneself up and dusting off after a setback. Resilience is relentless problem solving in pursuit of a goal. Resilience is reaching what you think is a breaking point and digging even deeper. Resilience is coming together in ways we didn’t think possible to overcome obstacles. Our nation and global community have faced and will face defining moments in 2020.

In my TED talk, I explore three ways to combat the participation trophy phenomenon and do our part to make communities stronger. We need to innovate, create and build

resilience now more than ever! Here's the link to watch it.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COWe\\_HFLw2w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COWe_HFLw2w)

Let me know what you think. I can be reached at

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*Jennifer Alessandra is an Andersen Alumni, Chief People Officer of [Frontdoor, Inc.](#) and known for helping businesses and employees navigate change. She was a collegiate athlete and part of the University of Southern California's National Championship swimming and diving team in 1997. Jennifer proudly answers to the titles wife, mom, dog lover, traveler and competitor (in almost anything).*

## M&A: A Market in Limbo

By **Don Bravaldo**, *Alumnus, Arthur Andersen & Co. (1993-1996) and President, Bravaldo Capital Advisors, Inc.* [www.BravaldoCapitalAdvisors.com](http://www.BravaldoCapitalAdvisors.com)

The social and financial toll of the coronavirus pandemic reveals itself hour by hour, day by day. Although a precise determination of the impact is still some time off, I feel confident concluding that the lower middle merger and acquisition market is in limbo, defined formally as “an intermediate state or condition.”

As expected, we have started to receive calls from value-oriented equity (PE) and hedge funds trolling for distressed assets in hopes of acquiring damaged companies on the cheap. It never takes long for the sharks to emerge during a crisis. Though tough to watch, it's really just a natural expression of what capitalism is all about. Sharks play a necessary function in private capital markets, as they do in the natural food chain.

### Ear to the Ground

Below is a summary of recent inquiries and market participant conversations reported by Bravaldo Capital Advisors team members.

**Business owners.** Calls from concerned business owners have ranged from “We just laid off 200 employees, can you help us locate a financing and restructuring attorney?” to, “Sales are up 30% over prior year and continue to climb; what should our strategy look like from here?” There's no guesswork involved in figuring out which call was from someone in the restaurant industry, and which is from the owner of niche ecommerce business.

**Deal attorneys.** We've heard from several deal attorneys, including one who reported heading into the weekend on Friday, March 13 with an executed deal in hand and final funding scheduled for that Monday, the 16<sup>th</sup>. Over the weekend, unscheduled crisis calls and emails indicated that the buyers were pulling out of this and other deals. They cited material adverse changes and *force majeure* provisions in contracts to kill deals. Similar scenarios have played out for many large, lower middle market transactions.

**Bankers.** Our banking contacts tell us they need to pause on any new debt financing opportunities, as traditional banks are all but sidelined right now. Understandably, they are busy supporting hard-hit borrowers seeking relief. As well they are devoting resources and energy to administering portions of the largest stimulus measure in modern American history, the CARES Act and its Paycheck Protection Program for small business.

**PE fund managers.** Growth-oriented private equity funds in our circle are in a temporary holding pattern as well. Most are busy completing portfolio risk assessments and attempting to triage badly damaged portfolio investments in hard-hit sectors.

A lucky few deals, mostly in the strategic add-on category, or deals that have been over equitized (low-debt leverage deals) have been able to fund and close amid the crisis.

### **The Sell Side**

As for sell-side processes, many yet-to-start mandates are back on the shelf. Our firm is fortunate to have current seller clients whose businesses have experienced modest positive impact on performance during the pandemic.

We are cautiously pressing ahead with sales processes. We are making plans to perform more deal work remotely, conduct video meetings with buyers, and provide additional company information through virtual data rooms for remote due diligence.

Optimistically, we are targeting transaction closing efforts for June 30 and beyond.

The big question in all this regards the status of private company valuations. Have we suddenly sunk from a high-gear sellers' market with record valuations, to a low-gear buyers' market with longer-term, depressed private company valuations? The answer is unclear.

Valuation is a function of two components: (1) a calculation of the present value of current and future business cash flows, and (2) an adjustment for the risk of sustaining those future cash flows. Setting aside badly damaged industries like travel, hospitality, entertainment and traditional brick-and-mortar retail, and assuming a return to work in the coming weeks or months, how does one assess risk appropriately in the current environment? Time and experience are essential tools. Public markets typically signal the way forward, but because private capital markets tend to be less liquid, it can take more time to settle out. Patience will be key.

### **New Kind of Crisis**

This crisis is markedly different from the 2008 recession. A key difference is that private equity is awash with capital, with \$1.4 trillion in dry powder waiting to invest as of December 2019. As well, banks are better capitalized due to requirements that resulted from the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act. The Federal Reserve seems to be ahead of the curve and is pulling out all the stops to keep debt capital markets liquid. Risk assessments and workouts will not take long and will not be all-consuming for PE.

Assuming the COVID-19 curve flattens, and financial markets stabilize in coming weeks, there will likely be an expected wave of distressed investors in the market, joined by a flood of high-quality PE investment funds. Among industries that may command a premium are those likely to thrive in the post-coronavirus period. Examples include:

- E-commerce retailers.
- Consumer logistics /delivery services.
- Food delivery services.
- IT outsourcing.
- New consumer products.
- Healthcare/pharmaceuticals/telemedicine.

An excess of demand over supply has been a driver in lower middle market valuation for quite some time. Though a rapid and broad economic turnaround may be unlikely, we anticipate strong demand for acquisitions later this year.

### **Cautious Optimism**

Bravaldo Capital Advisors will always pull for the underdogs and the heroes of capitalism—the owner/founders, family-run and closely held business owners that make up our client base. With luck and a realistic acknowledgment of damage to valuation in certain sectors, we remain confident that the broader U.S. economy can return to strength more quickly than many pundits predict. If so, we have an excellent chance to liberate ourselves from limbo on the way to a renewed seller's market.

As we do, we will be faced with a number of questions. Who will emerge as the new winners? How long will it take consumers to return to travel and tourism? How might consumer behavior and purchasing decisions be permanently changed going forward? These are just a few of the unknowns for strategic acquirers, PE investors and capital providers.

If I know Andersen alumni, you are reaching out to clients, partners, friends and area business leaders to find out how you can assist in these unprecedented times. Let's continue to do all we can to help small and midsized private businesses successfully regain their footing as we emerge, together, from this crisis.

## **A Strong Brand is the Key to Resilience**

By **Kim Schlossberg**, *Andersen Alumnus Marketing Manager 1992-2002 and owner of [Kim Schlossberg Designs](#)*

What a crazy time we're living in. We're swimming in a sea of uncertainty, and maybe a good dose of fear. Some of us are experiencing unexpected downtime (not me). Some of us are running schools and restaurants in addition to our regular businesses. Our business landscape is changing. No one is entirely sure what the world will look like in a few



months. We don't know what the world will look like tomorrow. We have an opportunity to use this time to take stock and make sure our businesses are well-positioned to succeed and thrive when things get back to normal. In other words, to make sure they are resilient.

I've been thinking a lot about resilience lately. We know that coming through this coronavirus pandemic, some people will live, and some will die, and hopefully, some will thrive. Some businesses will live, some will die, and some will truly thrive. We all hope that the people and businesses we care about are the ones who will make it. And, hopefully, most of us are taking the steps to make sure we're more likely to survive – to make sure we're as resilient as possible.



Resilient brands will all be different, but they will all have similarities. To survive – and thrive – over the long haul, brands will need to know exactly who they are, and then walk their talk in everything they do. During crazy times like this, consumers and customers don't have time or patience for hypocrisy. They will support brands that do what they say they will do. Who are who they say they are.

Last fall I explored how “[first we build our brand, then the brand builds us](#)” in an article. That concept has taken on a new depth and urgency lately, as businesses – and people – are on such shaky footing. Now more than ever, businesses who don't live up to who they say they are will fail. This is the time for being true to ourselves and our brand with boldness, compassion, and creativity.

When we define our brand, we are putting a stake in the ground, declaring, “this is who I am, this is what I stand for, this is the problem I solve, this is what I'll be true to, no matter what.” We build on and demonstrate that brand every day, in everything we do – how we treat our customers, the products and services we bring to market, how we treat our employees. During times like this, the ways in which we live out our brands – or betray our brands – will be on stark display. I would argue that “times like this” is the core reason we have brands – to guide us when things are uncertain.

In the midst of all this turmoil, so many companies and organizations are stepping up and doing the right things for their employees, their customers, and their communities. I predict these are the companies and brands that will come through this crisis strong and well-positioned for successful futures. They are supporting their employees, customers and communities, and these people will support them as soon as they are able to.

I find it uplifting to see so many businesses come up with creative ways to both survive and help people, while remaining true to their brand. I also believe it's very good business. Some of these brands are DOING something new now, but they are always BEING true to themselves – true to their brands. I'm featuring some of them on my Kim Schlossberg Designs [Facebook page](#), with the hashtag #pandemichero. Here are a few of my favorites:

- Good Local Markets has revised their operations and worked with officials to safely keep the market open during this stay-at-home time, providing the public with healthy, natural, locally grown food while providing local farmers and food producers a way to sell their goods. <https://www.goodlocalmarket.org/>
- Chef Chad Houser founded Café Momentum to give opportunity to young people coming out of the criminal justice system – kids who otherwise wouldn't have a chance at a career or a future. Café Momentum's internship program trains these young people to work every job in a restaurant, along with all the wrap-around social services to get them on the right path. Now that the restaurant can't open, they've pivoted and the interns are preparing and delivering food kits to food-insecure students (much more insecure, with all the schools closed) and families in the community. Learn more here: <http://cafemomentum.org/momentum-eats/>
- Hye Rum and so many other breweries and distilleries have pivoted to start making much-needed hand sanitizer for hospitals and medical offices. More here: <https://www.kvue.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/hye-rum-producing-hand-sanitizer-coronavirus/> Fashion companies, such as Abi Ferrin in Dallas, are making and donating face masks. <https://www.abiferrin.com/collections/face-masks>
- A young man in Africa is building hand washing stations out of metal oil drums and putting them around by all the bus stops. He might be getting funding to turn this into a business that serves an important community need and makes a fair profit for himself. <https://yen.com.gh/150667-mzansi-awe-mans-creativity-defeat-coronavirus-taxi-ranks.html>

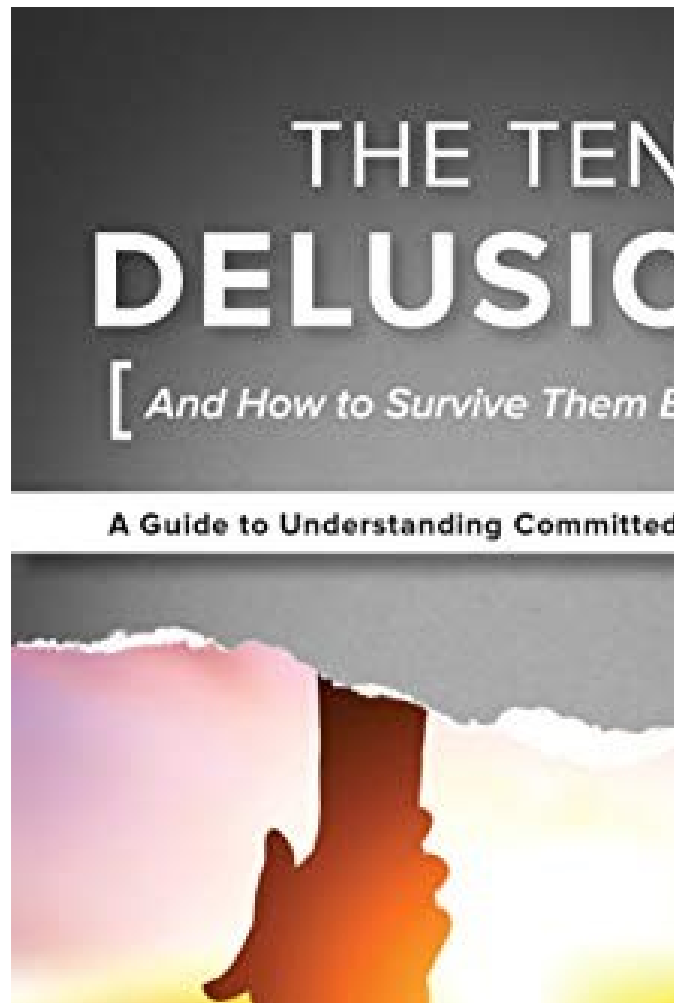
I'll continue to post more of these as I find them. Please feel free to share any stories you come across. I don't know about you, but now more than ever, I need all the positive news I can find!

I'm also hosting a Resiliency Group once a week, so our members can share with each other ideas, advice, resources, and encouragement while we each grow and maintain our own businesses during these unprecedented times. [Schedule a quick call](#) with me if you'd like to learn more about the group, or if you'd like to discuss your own (personal or business) brand strategy.

Stay home – wash your hands – leave some toilet paper for your neighbors – and stay well. Come out of this stronger and more resilient than ever.

# **New Book Release Authored by Andersen Alumnus Todd Dewett PhD: The Ten Delusions: And How To Survive Them Effectively**

**Todd Dewett, PhD**, *Andersen Alumnus (Nashville Office), and bestselling author and popular professional speaker.*



Your relationship with a spouse or partner can be the best thing in the world, and the most challenging. Why not make it something great? It's time to stop denying reality. You keep telling yourself, and everyone else, that your relationship is great – even though it is not. That's pretty normal, and you can do something about it right now. Let Dr. Dewett help you remove the biggest mental and behavioral barriers stopping you from

enjoying a happier, more comfortable, and productive relationship. It all starts with understanding the ten delusions that plague your relationship. Know them, stop them, and develop the ability to rethink and rebuild your relationship. If you are married, partnered, or in any form of long-term committed relationship, this is your practical guide to creating something better – something truly special.

#### Reviewer comments

“This book addresses what is so important to all of us, our committed relationships. Marriage can be simultaneously wonderful and extremely difficult. This practical guide allows you to realize the “chemical cloud” we are all under when forming new relationships and how to navigate when reality sets in. Once you know and understand “the ten delusions” and why they happen, you can follow the practical advice given by Dr. Dewett to circumvent the outcomes. Whether you are thinking about a new relationship, you’ve been committed for 40 years, or you’re somewhere in between, this book will help you find the way to a more fulfilling and happy relationship. Who doesn’t want that?”

“Dr. Todd Dewett’s work has influenced my decisions through all stages of my adult life, both personal and professional. Dr. Dewett always puts things in a different perspective. “[The Ten Delusions](#)” is a MUST read for everyone who is willing to explore how to build stronger and happier relationships.”

#### *Author Biography*

*Dr. Todd Dewett is one of the world’s most watched leadership personalities: a thought leader, an authenticity expert, best-selling author, top global instructor at LinkedIn Learning, a TEDx speaker, and an Inc. Magazine Top 100 leadership speaker. He has been quoted in the New York Times, TIME, Businessweek, Forbes, and many other outlets. After beginning his career with Andersen Consulting and Ernst & Young he completed his PhD in Organizational Behavior at Texas A&M University and enjoyed a career as an award-winning professor. Todd has delivered over 1,000 speeches to audiences at Microsoft, ExxonMobil, Pepsi, Boeing, General Electric, IBM, Kraft Heinz, Caterpillar, and hundreds more. His educational library at LinkedIn Learning has been enjoyed by over 30,000,000 professionals in more than one hundred countries in eight languages. Visit his home online at [www.drdebett.com](http://www.drdebett.com) or connect with Todd on LinkedIn. He can be reached at [todd@drdebett.com](mailto:todd@drdebett.com)*

**Entrepreneurial Spirit: Ascend Technologies, a 100+ person “start-up” carved-out from West Monroe Partners, launches during a pandemic**

**By Mark Nelson, Andersen Alumnus and Co-Founder/Chief Strategy Officer Ascend Technologies**

*“A bend in the road is not the end of the road... unless you fail to make the turn.” Unknown*

In 2009, while working at West Monroe Partners, an Andersen Alumni founded firm, as a technology consultant running a successful technology consulting practice, Mark Nelson, Andersen Alumnus, was finishing a 9-month engagement as the interim CIO for R.J. O’Brien (RJO), a futures brokerage firm. Coming out of the experience as an interim CIO and running IT operations and strategy for RJO, Mark worked with the executive leadership of West Monroe to start a Managed Services practice. Ten years later, he worked to spin off the Managed Services practice as an independent Managed Services Provider – a 100+ person start-up which launched during COVID-19 as most companies’ attention was on supporting a remote workforce.

### **Starting a Managed Services Practice within a Consulting Firm**

As West Monroewas starting to really gain a foothold in Chicago as a business and technology consulting firm and expanding nationally, the case for managed services was fairly simple. Develop a practice that partners with clients, runs their IT operations, develop longer-term relationships, be a partner vs. a vendor and create recurring revenue. “We were engaged on technology design and implementation projects from a consulting standpoint, but then doing knowledge transfer to internal teams. Many times, the clients still needed our expertise for ongoing support and enhancements due to lack of capabilities or actual head count for support,” said Mark Nelson, Chief Strategy Officer for Ascend Technologies. “Managed Services was a great extension of consulting services to meet our clients’ needs. This allowed us to move away from one-and-done projects and partner with our clients on a long-term basis while working hand-and-hand with them on their daily operations. We were able to increase the maturity of our clients’ IT organizations from process to strategy to tools to cost optimization to best practices,” Nelson said.

### **Building from the Ground Up**

As the consulting practice was engaged on large scale technology implementations, the Managed Services practice built off the same technology stack, but with a separate team completely focused on managed services and IT operations. The practice started with a focus on client service and providing three main services: end user support, endpoint management and cloud/infrastructure management. Where other MSPs were data center providers or VARs focused on hardware and software sales, the practice started with the client at the center and how best to service their needs to enable their business to grow. The early days were about building the practice from the ground up. Where in consulting you can hire a few really talented professionals that have great experience in a vertical industry or horizontal solution, in managed services you have to build out 24x7

capabilities, hire for weekend shifts, implement key tools and software and create best practices and important IT services (Incident Management, Change Management, etc.).

When the managed services practice was started and needed additional leadership and operational expertise, another Andersen alumni was hired, Justin Stefano. Justin had worked at another Andersen alumni start-up, Five9 Technologies, where he led the ITIL practice and was focused on IT process and services management. The experience working with mid-market and enterprise clients on designing and building mature operational processes was the exact need the Managed Services practice had as it was growing. “We had to build similar processes and operations that a mature mid-market or enterprise IT department would create, but that could thrive in a multi-tenant environment and support clients of different sizes and industries,” said Justin Stefano, SVP of Operations for Ascend Technologies.

Another important initiative as the practice started was creating a career model that is different from a consulting career model. Even when the practice was approximately 10 people in the incubation phase, culturally they wanted to be a people and career-oriented firm. “Even though we still had a long way to go to build out the practice, we knew having a career model that provided great opportunities for people who either wanted a technical or management career path would allow us to hire and retain the best and brightest,” said Nelson.

### **Scale and Differentiation**

The next phase was getting scale and differentiating from the competition. The practice was grown organically without any outside investment or acquisition, as they built 24x7 coverage and all the technical skillsets needed to support complex mid-market clients, especially those in regulated industries. The practice was built to be high-touch and client-focused, which required strong technical skillsets, but with a consultative approach to communication and management. “After the initial years, we were really all hands-on-deck to provide great client service while also continuing to build out operations, tools and coverage. We were all on-call 24x7, but the team had a real entrepreneurial spirit knowing we were trying to build something different than your average MSP. Many of us look back fondly on those early years and the war stories that come with bootstrapping a practice,” Nelson said.

The team then focused on expanding its capabilities and offerings to differentiate from the competition. The firm added an Application and Data Management offering focused on Salesforce, Microsoft SharePoint, .Net custom development and Microsoft SQL and MySQL data management. The practice brought in another Andersen alumni, Evan Callender, who was a Director in a West Monroe consulting practice, to head-up that team. “The chance to be an entrepreneur and grow a small application management team and create the Go-To-Market and operational processes was a great opportunity,” says Callender, SVP Application and Data Management for Ascend Technologies. After the



investment in the Application and Data Management practice, the team developed a Cybersecurity Management offering to provide enhanced security via Managed Detection and Response, vCISO services, vulnerability management and endpoint management.

### **Ascend**

As West Monroe's consulting practice began to focus more on the enterprise space and the strategy differentiated from a mid-market managed services provider, the managed services leaders Nelson, Stefano and Callender worked with West Monroe leadership to take the practice to market and find the right owner who was interested in investing and growing a managed services business. In 2019, the Managed Services practice was divested and purchased by M/C Partners, a Boston-based private equity firm. They have spent the last four months building a brand, website, back-office, etc. The new firm, named [Ascend Technologies](#), started with 100+ people as a new managed services platform focused on the mid-market and aims to be the premier managed services provider in the Midwest. Along with Nelson, Stefano and Callender, the firm has also integrated with a small Cybersecurity firm from Cincinnati, Gratia, Inc., and added additional leadership from Gratia: Wayne Kiphart, CEO and Thomas Runge, COO. Willem Britz, CFO, and Dana Bailey, CRO have also been added to the executive team. "It has been a really interesting time to launch a new company as everyone is working from home and we couldn't do some of the typical launch activities. As we start on this new venture, we are really trying to combine the culture we helped develop and appreciated at Andersen, West Monroe and Gratia and leave the things we didn't like behind to create a great people-focused culture that works for an innovative managed services firm." said Nelson

### **Right for Andersen Alumni?**

Would Ascend Technologies appeal to Andersen alumni?

"Definitely" says Nelson. "In a managed services provider, we have developed the professionalism and culture you would find in a consulting firm. We are typically told, whether win or lose with a new prospect, that we were the most professional from proposal to interactions and orals. If you are interested in a small firm that has an appetite for growth, innovation and acquisition, Ascend Technologies is a great career choice."

For more information, visit [www.teamascend.com](http://www.teamascend.com).

# Refiner's Fire: Embracing Disruption

By Warren Turner, Andersen Alumnus and Partner Cardinal Points Group

The intensity of the refiner's fire burns off impurities leaving behind something purer. Today's disruption is the refiner's fire and serves as a catalyst for IT betterment. Will there be pain and suffering? Yes, there will be. No one willingly ventures into a live furnace. Left to our own devices we would not have sought this disruption but here we are, so let's make the best of it.



Looking through our current situation we see better days ahead. If we have learned anything from history coming out of major disruptions, things will be different, but we will be stronger.

*"That which does not kill us, makes us stronger"* Friedrich Nietzsche, philosopher

Today's disruption has challenged businesses of all kinds. It has challenged our business model and the means which we support and transact such. As the World has Flattened (Thomas Friedman's The World is Flat) we have become increasingly dependent on technology and spoiled by the speed at which business is transacted. The refiner's fire has challenged our IT infrastructure and exposed the hidden cost of our organization's technical debt. According to IT experts (Gartner, Forrester, IDC etc.) approximately 75-85% of an IT budget is consumed maintaining status quo. Exposing these costs, provides an opportunity to address and correct them.

*"There are those that look at things the way they are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"* Bernard Shaw, playwright

There are three phases to navigating today's disruption and its impact on IT, Triage, Surgery and Recovery. Below is a set of challenging questions to assist Business and IT Leaders through each phase:

## **Triage**

1. How are you strengthening remote work capabilities?
2. How are securing your new mode of business operations?
3. How are you supporting collaborative work efforts / agile operations?
4. How are you preparing for vendor/supply chain disruptions?

## **Surgery**

1. How are you implementing cost cutting measures?
2. How are you re-balancing and deploying assets?

## Recovery

1. How are you embracing new technologies?
2. How are you leveraging new opportunities for client interaction?

Each of the above phases will stress and challenge leadership skills

**Triage** is fast paced yet requires a sense of calm and reassurance. There needs to be tolerance in communication and an ability to quickly assess the situation. Time is not your friend.

**Surgery** is a bit slower and requires precision and focus. Surgeons possess and portray an air of self confidence as they are masters of their domain.

**Recovery** can be long and drawn out. It requires discipline and positive reinforcement for changes to take hold. Nothing should be allowed to get in the way of the organization's newfound health.

I hope you find the above questions helpful as you help move your organization forward. One final thought, something I was taught long ago.

*"When life deals you lemons, make lemonade"* Janice Turner, my mom

## Values Gone Naked

By John Blumberg, Andersen Alumnus and author of *Return On Integrity*  
([www.BlumbergROI.com](http://www.BlumbergROI.com))

About the time I was beginning to write the leadership version of [\*Return On Integrity\*](#), I had the opportunity to meet up with Jerry Porras, co-author with Jim Collins of the best-seller, [\*Built to Last\*](#). Our discussion naturally moved to a discussion about values. I knew that Jerry and Jim had addressed organizational values in their book, yet I wondered if they had given much focus on personal values. He said they had not. He paused saying: *"I think you are on to something."* Our conversation continued a bit before Jerry reflected: *"We truly understand our core values when they are put to the test. Until then they are just a concept."* I followed with: *"I agree ... and, yet, I fully believe the moment of the test is a really horrible time to start figuring them out."* He smiled and said: *"I think you're on to something!"* Now, looking back, I think my response was, at best, only half right.

I still believe, whether we are talking about organizational values or personal values, that the moment of the test – the change, the challenge, the confrontation, the crunch, the crisis, or the catastrophe – is a really horrible time to start figuring them out. However, at the same time, if you haven't already figured them out by the moment of that test ...

## **It is the perfect time to start.**

In times of crisis, those very layers that fog the vision of our core values (our needs, our wants and our compliant behaviors) are often ripped away. In effect, that leaves our values standing there, as I used to say growing-up in the south, *butt-naked!* To take that a step further — without some careful attention to the need for initially grasping and ultimately discerning a set of strongly grounded values — it can likely leave one fully exposed as a complete ass!

While it won't be intentional ... it will simply be the human nature blindness of our ungrounded fear reaching-for and clinging-to the illusion of desperate needs, wants and frantic behaviors.

What's worse is when "values" *have been* pre-identified – *yet they are not values at all*. They are simply words expressing wonderful behaviors, inspiring wants and valid needs. As I look across the landscape of stated organizational core values (as well as on the list of many individuals) this is often the case. Needs, wants and behaviors are all important — yet in the time of a real test, they will fall short of the depth of insight that is needed. And in the void of real core values, they will likely take you down a path driven by panic and protection of the past – rather than faith and fortitude towards the future.

Core values guide the long-term trajectory of *who you are becoming*. Yet, in the moment of a big test, your core values stand naked – fully revealing *who you are* – to both yourself and everyone else. And for some individuals and organizations, the moment of this big test gives them the rich opportunity to see just how far they have drifted from *who they really meant to be*.

Nothing in an organization or in our personal lives holds us more accountable to the joy of who we really are than our core values. They don't guide us towards soft and easy decisions. Rather, they keep us strong in the midst of the most tough decisions – and show us how to proceed through those tough decisions — carrying them out with a grace that fully honors the values we have come to understand and embrace.

There are only a handful of times in life where a truly significant test is presented to us. And while it won't feel this way, it would be a great tragedy to miss the fact...

## **These tests are gifts for your core.**

*We are in the midst of living through one of those rare gifts.* Yet, unlike any other time in our life, this gift is offered individually, organizationally, nationally and globally – *all at the same time*.

In my body of work on integrity, I have noted that behaviors, wants, needs and core values are all uniquely important. At the same time, I have noted that the most distinguishing characteristic of a core value is that *it never divides*. This is precisely why core values are so critical in a time of crisis. For they are the seeds that give birth to the

opportunity that awaits inside every crisis – for every person, for every organization, for every nation ... and yes, this time, for our entire planet.

**In a time like this, your values are showing anyway.**

What a wonderful time to go ahead and strip-down, intentionally rediscover our core values and let them shine as a guiding light ... *butt naked!*

As always, I would love to hear your thoughts, insights, and comments below!

***Author's Note:** You might of thought it was “buck naked.” This is a **BOTH/AND**, so you would be half right. Either way (butt or buck) the expression is slang ... and you might say both get you to the same idea!*

*John G. Blumberg is an Andersen Alumni, a national speaker and author of several books. His books are available on Amazon and at major bookstores. You can connect with John at <http://www.blumbergroi.com/connect>*

# SACRED COWS MAKE GREAT BARBEQUE

**By Todd Dewett, PhD, Andersen Alumnus, Keynote Speaker and Best-Selling Author**

**This article is an extract from Todd's forthcoming book [Live Hard](#)**

Innovation can happen when a select few individuals in an organization step up and try new things. However, it's much more likely to have impact and be sustainable when everyone believes in the organization's innovation culture. A culture that is serious about change is always stronger than one or two innovators.

One of the most enduring hallmarks of any effective innovation culture is the ability to deal with sacred cows. This refers to a custom, behavior, product, process, or rule that is known to all, unproductive, and yet untouchable and unaddressed. Much respect to my Hindu friends and their reverence for cows, but the phrase is now so much bigger. It's a general reference to something that is above criticism – something that can't be touched.

Simply stated, most sacred cows are not sacred! They are simply choices that became long standing routines. These routines become accepted as the way we do things, and, endorsed by enough people, they eventually become untouchable!

The concept is used most often at a macro level, addressing rules, processes, business models, and markets. The examples are plentiful. No one ever thought Microsoft

Windows was the best we could do, but it has been accepted historically as the operating system standard by the majority of computer users and developers. Then Linux was created. Then computing went mobile, and Android sprung to life.

Consider cars. The internal combustion engine has been mostly obsolete for decades. Yet it has persisted very successfully. Similarly, the dealer network approach to sales has long persisted. This was the only buyer reality, until recently. Tesla chose to upend two sacred cows. They decided to sell fully electric cars directly to consumers. They are now the most valuable car company in history.

Nothing lasts forever. Things are supposed to change, in business as in life. The more interesting issue is whether or not you benefit from change, or more to the point, whether or not you're helping to create the change.

Let's take it down a level and focus on your workplace. Think about that executive perk that is unjustifiable. The fact that we're always expected to work weekends. That crazy dress code. The vacation policy you loathe. The terrible system of accountability at work that allows low performers to always get by. Sound familiar?

The idea is so fascinating it became the inspiration behind one of my most popular original quotes, "Sacred cows make great barbeque." The point is that a whole lot of what we hold sacred isn't really sacred, it's just the way we've always done things – and making needed change just might taste great.

The same happens in your personal life. There are things that exist, that you respect and don't question, that are supposed to help you or guide you. Maybe they once did, but they don't any longer. It could be an old friend, a personal belief, or possibly a practice or a habit. Whatever it is, it stops you from growing, being more productive, and being happier. You're starting to realize that change is needed. Is it time to question one your sacred cows?

Let's make some barbeque. What you target is up to you, but let's be honest, we all have multiple targets. It might have to do with your religious beliefs. It could have to do with your diet. Maybe your family traditions. How about the pronouns you prefer? Who knows? You can't hold on to any standard or tradition just because you always have. Sometimes that leads to special traditions. Many times it's just dumb.

Don't worry, I'm not telling you to upend everything you do! We only have a certain capacity for personal change. Target one or two things that matter to you and make the decision to be brave. Choose to no longer step over the dead body in the room as if it were not there.

Sure, that's risky. Yes, it takes guts. Sometimes it might even be painful and cause problems between you and others in your life. It's your choice. You can play it safe by not rocking the boat. Or, you can roll the dice and attempt real change. I can promise



you this much – great things are more likely to happen in your life when you address a few sacred cows. The fallout is worth it.

The benefits are undeniable. You stand a chance to change and improve the thing in question. You elevate your level of consciousness, reducing the likelihood of future sacred cows becoming a problem, you show others what you stand for and how strong you are, and you learn how to communicate about the need for change more effectively.

One of my favorite examples ever involved a former MBA student in a course I was teaching dedicated to creativity and innovation. One of the themes in the course was inspired by the Einstein quote, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” There is plenty of research in various areas of business and psychology that supports this idea.

The practical application of the idea in the course was to encourage the students to go find new perspectives for the biggest problems they face at work. I specifically asked them to target a sacred cow and start making barbeque. I remember at least two students who voiced out loud that they thought this sounded fluffy, and wondered about the importance of the assignment.

Near the end of the term, everyone shared what they had learned from the assignment. One student who took the task seriously worked for a manufacturer of various pieces of equipment used in underwater applications. His company professed a strong belief in innovation, but one of their sacred cows was that you were not supposed to discuss your problems outside of your division. Each division chased similar top line metrics and to partner or share with other divisions was tantamount to helping the competition.

Thankfully, this student, an engineer by training, really liked barbeque.

He targeted a particular material that was prominent in several major products sold by his division. The goal was to find something cheaper and hopefully stronger, and it had to conduct electricity effectively under sometimes enormous underwater pressure. Even though people openly questioned what he was doing, he spent time in three other divisions and even had meetings with two key suppliers. Eyebrows were raised.

He eventually found the new material he wanted, a particular type of alloy he didn’t even know existed. It was cheaper. It was stronger. It had all the qualities he was looking for. The costs savings were projected to be over \$10,000,000 in the first year alone, not to mention likely new revenues due to the fact that the material made the product more attractive in the market.

The student’s boss, an engineering manager, initially questioned him, but decided to stay out of his way. In the end, he was so pleased he sent me a very kind email encouraging me to continue with my practical teaching methods. With the student’s permission, I read the email to the class. As people clapped and high fived him, I refrained from directly staring at the two students who so brazenly questioned the assignment weeks earlier.

If that doesn't inspire you, maybe you'll feel moved by one the most famous sacred cow stories ever told – it's the story of Dick Fosbury. As a high school high jumper in the 1960s, Dick used the acceptable jumping method, called the straddle method. It was the only acceptable method. You go over the bar face down – first your torso, then one leg, then the other. Unfortunately, Dick just couldn't master the technique.

However, he was determined and curious, so, he began to experiment. Quickly one of his efforts started to dominate his attempts. He tried to jump over the bar, face up, with his back facing the bar. Initially, he had a little success, but nothing major. It just looked bizarre to most observers, one of whom suggested he looked like he was having an airborne seizure. His coach was not initially supportive.

When he started, he couldn't complete jumps at five feet high with the standard technique. With the new technique, he began to make progress. They made fun of him, but he continued making progress. A local reporter derided his method and called it the Fosbury Flop. Dick continued improving anyway.

Soon enough, he set the school record for his high school. Dick eventually won multiple NCAA championships, and Olympic Gold in 1968 in Mexico City by jumping over seven feet, three inches. Today, nearly all competitors around the world use the Fosbury Flop method.

Innovation isn't always beloved when it's first proposed or first attempted. Most people cringe when someone attacks a sacred cow. So what. Persevere. They'll come around. If they don't, try again.

Or, you can join the chorus of voices saying, "That's just the way it is." Or, you can simply contribute to the deafening silence of the people ignoring the dead body in the room.

To achieve a dream and find real success almost always requires some form of innovation. Innovation, in turn, almost always requires you to deal with a sacred cow or two – whether making personal change or leading an organization. What are you waiting for? Start cooking. I want to smell some barbeque.

# Best Ways to Use LinkedIn During the Coronavirus Pandemic

By **Wayne Breitbarth**, *Andersen Alumnus and CEO-Power Formula LLC (Author of "The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success: Kick-Start Your Business, Brand and Job Search")*

*"The long-term relevance of the brand is more important than short-term sales."*

That is a quote from a recent [blog post](#) by [Mark Schaefer](#), author of six best-selling marketing books. His most recent book, [KNOWN: The Handbook for Building and Unleashing Your Personal Brand in the Digital Age](#), is my go-to reference on this topic.

In this blog post he talks about the importance of adjusting our marketing messages to the needs of our audience.



Remember Maslow's hierarchy of needs? Well, most people are hanging around the bottom of the pyramid during the coronavirus pandemic (safety and physiological needs).

## What does this mean for you as a LinkedIn user?

In the short term, it's important to address your network's current safety and physiological needs, while at the same time maintaining a positive, relevant professional brand and positioning yourself and your business to thrive in the post-pandemic economy.

Here are some simple ways LinkedIn can help you now and in the future.

## Offer to help your LinkedIn network

Because your LinkedIn network is made up of some people who are important business connections and others who are more casual acquaintances, it's best to start by doing a filtered search of your first-level connections (see how to do this below).

Review the search results in detail, and then decide which people you'd like to reach out to and ask how they're doing and how you can help them. You can reach out with a simple LinkedIn message. However, if you make a phone call or set up a Zoom meeting, you may be able to more effectively meet their immediate needs and also discuss future business opportunities.

If you have built a strong network and use these advanced search filters, you should be rewarded with a list of people who are waiting for your help and input.

My article [\*Your LinkedIn Network is a Gold Mine of Opportunity\*](#) includes step-by-step instructions for finding and messaging key people in your network.

### **Share content on LinkedIn that clearly reflects your readiness to address the needs of your target audience**

LinkedIn is telling us that sharing has increased during the pandemic. Therefore, it's critical that your network hears your trusted voice at this time. As long as your sharing strategy has a tone of caring, concern, and helpfulness, it's the perfect time to get your best content out there.

In a [recent article](#) that discusses the kind of content that performs well during crisis situations, they give these tips:

1. Post about your experiences.
2. Discover and comment on conversations that are most relevant to you.
3. Be yourself and offer your unique perspective.
4. Stay informed with trusted news and share your thoughts.

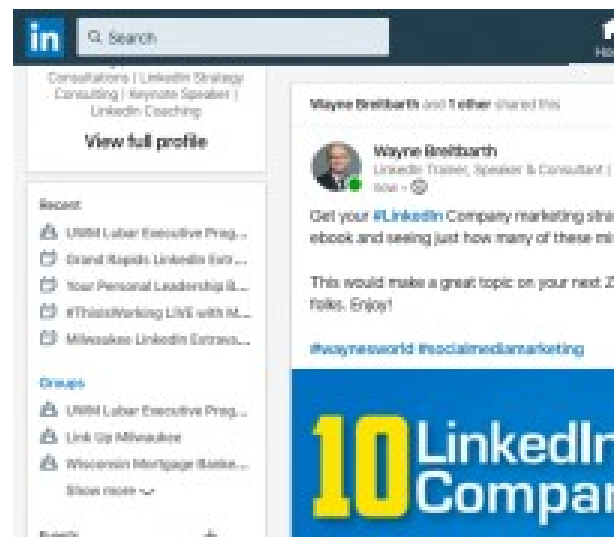
In my opinion, this boils down to things like instructional videos, how-to's, case studies, recordings of past webinars, and blog posts that are highly educational and low on sales pitch.

Also included in this category would be invitations to complimentary webinars, free eBooks, and complimentary short phone consultations.

In my article [\*Do You Know How to Improve the Performance of Your LinkedIn Content?\*](#)

I share insights on how to improve the effectiveness of your LinkedIn posts.

Keep in mind the current mindset of your target audience, and reflect a consistent spirit of kindness and helpfulness in your posts and comments on other people's posts. This is not the time for hard-sell tactics.



## Pivot your LinkedIn profile from a resume to a resource

The vast majority of the profiles I see during my one-on-one LinkedIn consulting sessions look like resumes—and sometimes not even very good resumes.

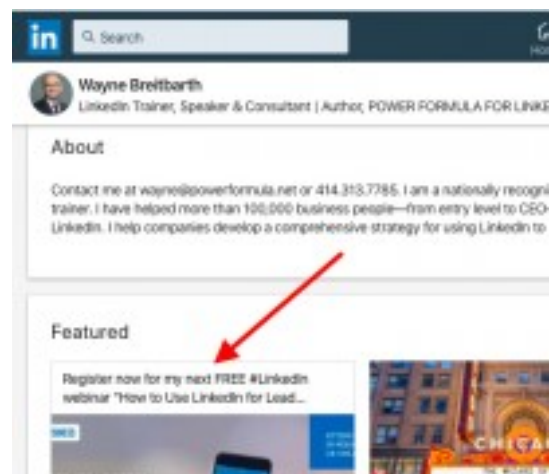
Let's say you're in sales or business development. Your prospective customers are not really interested in your past sales awards and seeing that your top skill is negotiation. They're only interested in how you can solve their pain points, make their jobs easier, and impress their bosses. This is especially true in the current environment.

Here are some simple ways to turn your profile into a valuable resource.

Add some of your most helpful content (videos, recorded webinars, white papers, tip sheets, etc.) to some or all of these profile sections: the brand new [Featured section](#), the media area of your current job entry, and the website area of your Contact Info section.

Review your profile with a critical eye, and see if it has a tone of kindness and helpfulness.

In your About section and your current Job Experience section, offer a complimentary phone call or Zoom session to share your thoughts and expertise on your target audience's current situation or pain points.



Once you are done with your profile revisions, ask one of your cherished customers (who also happens to be a friend) to take a look at your profile, be brutally honest, and answer this question:

*"If you didn't know me and you looked at my profile, would you say it reflects a high level of helpfulness, and do you think you would consider having a phone call with me?"*

Use the extra time you have during the coronavirus pandemic to reach out and show important people in your network that you care, and revamp your profile so your brand will shine when our economy gets back on track, customers start buying, and companies start hiring again.

Stay safe out there.

# Uncertainty in the Markets: How to Maintain Stability in Your Business

By **J. James O'Malley**, *Andersen Alumnus and Managing Director at Comhar Partners*

Market uncertainty and disruption is going to create uncertainty and disruption in your workforce. This is especially true if you are in an industry that is being heavily impacted by Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), like the airline industry, energy sector, and hospitality market, where the impact is most volatile. Conversely, in healthcare, supply chain/distribution, crisis response, cleaning and community response, job needs are surging, according to [Glassdoor reports](#).

Regardless of whether you're hiring because of market demand or making up for employee losses, this is not a time to take a break—in recruiting and in long-term and on-going projects and priorities.

Instead, we need to work harder and continue to look ahead at what the impact will be once the dust settles. The market will rebound from this event and those that will happen in the future. That recovery will come just as hard and fast as we saw with the last downturn, making it critical that you are ready to leverage the strength of rising markets.

The question is: how do you continue moving forward while maintaining stability in business operations and hiring? Here are a few simple ways to keep the future as your focus.

## **Leverage Technology**

There's no reason to slow down with employees working from home. Thanks to technology and telecommunications, everything can remain on schedule. While this unplanned disruption requires you to re-think processes, you can shift and rely on the many solutions available to you, including:

- Digital meetings via phone or video allow you to continue connecting and innovating, regardless of location.
- Real-time chat tools make quick conversations and text-based collaboration easy.
- Shared drives or digital asset management tools (DAM) make it easy for everyone to have access to docs, videos, images and more without having to request access or get on a call.

## **Leverage the Gig Economy**

The gig economy allows you to tap into a growing pool of talent that's available nationwide, with [57 million Americans](#) taking on freelance work, as of 2020. If you've lost employees and need someone to pick up the pieces fast, or are looking for quick



support, freelancers and contract workers can step in, without extensive onboarding or the paperwork necessary for full-time hiring.

What's more compelling, freelancers are used to working from home and connecting online, making the transition even easier for you during an already hectic time.

You can find freelancers through your current network of professionals and business owners, or online. Freelancing sites like [UpWork](#) provide a large network of freelancers to choose from. Simply search for what you need and sort through to find the best potential candidates.

### **Leverage Hiring Experts**

If you're losing employees, now is the time to connect with the people who know how to facilitate search, regardless of what's going on in the world. Our name, Comhar means collaboration, and we are here to be a partner to our clients, regardless of market volatility. As Executive Search consultants we not only support your human capital needs but also provide strategic guidance for managing these unusual and unpredictable times.

Finally, we can provide you with a one-stop-shop experience, so you don't need to juggle multiple companies or vendors. We have expanded our service offerings to include [Professional Recruiting](#) and [Talent Advisory Services](#), so we can be the best partner for much of your hiring and talent needs.

### **You *Can* Maintain Stability During Uncertainty**

Don't let Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) scare you into losing a step—you'll be at a further disadvantage once the economy bounces back if you lose sight of long-term goals now. The legacy problems you've been working to solve will remain once this passes, so keep moving forward, leveraging technology, the gig economy and the hiring experts you'll need to bounce back stronger than before.

*J. James O'Malley, Managing Director at Comhar Partners, has been developing HR and talent acquisition solutions for global consulting firms (including Huron Consulting Group, Arthur Andersen, Deloitte and Lante) since the mid-90s. Jim has seen firsthand why consultants are frustrated by and don't "get" recruiting. Based on his experience, he addresses the differences between large and boutique recruitment firms below. It's his intent to dispel myths that consultants hold about recruiting while, at the same time, ensuring that recruiters who work for firms are free to do their jobs, which is hiring the "best and the brightest".*

# Alumni Sponsors Wanted



Andersen Alumni Association is proud not to charge annual alumni dues and relies rather on strategic sponsorship to fund operations. Given advances in technology and alumni mobility Andersen Alumni Association is seeking a few additional qualified sponsors. If you think your company may benefit from a strategic partnership with the Association, please email [Admin@andersenalumni.com](mailto:Admin@andersenalumni.com) for more information.

## ALUMNI BENEFITS:

### Message from LinkedIn – Update Feature

**Reprint: Communication received by Andersen Alumni Association**

Thank you for your continued dedication to your Groups! ([Andersen Alumni Association Group Page](#))

Based on member feedback, we have invested in improving the ways that our members can engage in meaningful conversations within safe and healthy communities like yours.

In our latest update to Groups, members will be able to easily message anyone in the group without message limits and will have the flexibility to control which messages they accept or privately decline. Members will receive a notification about their message requests just like they would with a regular message and continue the conversation with a single click of "accept".

Thank you for your commitment to keeping your community safe and productive. To learn more about this update, visit our help center.

Sincerely,

The LinkedIn Team

### NEW Medicare Medical Savings Accounts (MSA)

Andersen Alumni Association has partnered with Medicare Caddy to provide our members with a NO COST TO YOU Medicare insurance expert to help you optimize the Medicare benefits available - wherever you live. Medicare Caddy, LLC is a licensed insurance agency that only works with existing or soon-to-be Medicare beneficiaries.

Medicare Caddy KNOWS the Medicare course and is a leader in providing educational programs about the unique benefits of Medicare Medical Savings Accounts (MSAs) as well as other Medicare Advantage, Medigap and Part D Prescription Drug Plans.

Greg O'Brien is Managing Principal of Medicare Caddy, LLC. Based in Atlanta, GA, Medicare Caddy is a licensed insurance agency specializing in all forms of Medicare related insurance. Medicare Caddy has helped hundreds of people evaluate Medicare options and enroll in the plans that optimize their Medicare benefits.

Greg can be reached by email at [greg.obrien@medicarecaddy.com](mailto:greg.obrien@medicarecaddy.com), phone 404.821.1886 or visit <https://www.medicarecaddy.com/medicare-msa/AndersenAlumni>

### **Mortgage – Wintrust Mortgage**

Andersen Alumni Association has partnered with Jennifer Sobocienski, (*alumnus from our Andersen Chicago office*) Senior Mortgage Consultant, NMLS 755995, and Wintrust Mortgage, the 11th largest bank-owned retail mortgage originator in the country with more than 200 lending offices across the United States, to offer our members a preferred lending partner and mortgage benefit. This program offers a dedicated team of mortgage professionals to serve our members and provides a \$500 Visa gift card after closing a residential loan with Jennifer at Wintrust Mortgage. For more information about the program and Jennifer's contact information visit [www.wintrustmortgage.com/andersenalumni](http://www.wintrustmortgage.com/andersenalumni).

### **Long Term Care – Insurance Coverage**

70% of Americans over 65 will need some form of long-term care. And that care will be expensive. According to a recent survey, the cost for long term care can currently range from \$48,000 a year for home care to \$98,000 a year for a private room in a nursing home; and costs are increasing every day. Planning for these expenses with long term care insurance can help you maintain your lifestyle, protect your assets and savings, and give you the options necessary to receive care and services.

BPB Associates of Atlanta has been helping families like yours with their extended health care planning needs for 33 years and has negotiated special discount carrier pricing for Andersen Alumni members. Click here for more information:

[www.bpbassociates.com/andersenalumni/LTC](http://www.bpbassociates.com/andersenalumni/LTC)

### **International Travel – Medjet Assist**

Medjet provides reduced annual rates for its Air Medical Transfer membership program on a voluntary purchase basis to North American members affiliated with ***Andersen Alumni Association***. Medjet provides single point coordination for the safety and protection of organizational clients and individuals/families as they travel for personal or business reasons - domestically and abroad. Zero cost beyond the membership fee for services coordinated by Medjet in medically transporting a member back to a home country hospital of their choice in time of need.

Medjet also offers an optional membership upgrade branded as Medjet Horizon that provides (among multiple membership benefits) a 24/7 Crisis Response Center for **Travel Security and Crisis Response** consultation and coordinated in-country services.

**Learn More/Enroll?** Persons from the U.S., Canada or Mexico can visit Medjet at [www.Medjet.com/Andersen](http://www.Medjet.com/Andersen) or call Medjet at 1.800.527.7478 or 1.205.595.6626.

Reference Andersen Alumni if calling. Enroll prior to travel.

Reduced Medjet annual membership rates for persons from North America under age 75 start at \$250. Multi-year and short-term rates are also available. Rules and Regulations available online and provided with Member ID cards.

## **Social Media: Association's LinkedIn Group (Join), Company (Follow) and Facebook Fan Page (Like)**



Social Media is a great way for us to stay connected. To request the Association Status be added to your LinkedIn Profile click on the following URL to JOIN:

<http://www.linkedin.com/e/gis/38306/6E0CB25BC94E>

Additionally you can “FOLLOW” the Association by clicking on the following URL:

[http://www.linkedin.com/company/andersen-alumni-association?trk=tabs\\_biz\\_home](http://www.linkedin.com/company/andersen-alumni-association?trk=tabs_biz_home)

To “JOIN” our new Facebook fan page simply click on the following:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Andersen-Alumni/182112725168442>