

FLAME

LET'S LIGHT THE WORLD





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Message



Friends,

We cook our food and feed a family with a FLAME.

We light the way in the midst of darkness with a FLAME.

We honor fallen champions and heroes with a FLAME.

When we spark a FLAME within our community, our businesses, relationships, and every-day communication, we see results that are profitable, enjoyable and victorious.

F.L.A.M.E. or Faith, Love, Appreciation, Motivation, and Empathy, change the course of the things that matter most in our lives both personally and professionally. We empower our own success and that of those around us when we go to business and life with F.L.A.M.E.

I encourage you to pour into others, and allow wisdom and value to pour into you through the lens of FLAME. Now, please enjoy this edition of FLAME, which is powered by Collaborative Solutions Group, our supervising editor Christina Bartolotta, and all of our amazing contributors!

About CSG

Personal and professional growth only happens after YOU start growing. Taking action is key when your expectations are to fully develop skills and enjoy meaningful results. There are six core elements that we focus on to help you grow in to the best version of yourself. These elements do not exist on their own. Each element influences the others and how you balance these interactions is vital to personal growth...

Opportunities For Growth

1. Growth Events:
2. CSG Premium—Private Coaching
3. CSG Lite—Group Coaching
4. Club CSG
5. The Master Within
6. Solutions From the Huddle
7. Critical Strategy Guide

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FAITH



Finding Light in the Darkness

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, *"In every individual's life, comes that special moment when he or she will be called upon to do something great, and what a tragedy it would be, if at that moment, they were unprepared for the task."*

Growing up as a boy, I would spend weekends with my grandparents. On a Saturday night after supper, Granddaddy Russell and I would sit on the backdoor steps where he would polish his shoes. He always wanted to look his best for Church the next morning.

I still recall one evening when he asked, "Billy, have you got those shoes shined up for church tomorrow?" I recall answering that my shoes were still shined from the week before.

Not one to be deterred, Granddaddy examined my shoes, gave me a stern look, and simply handed me the brush and polish. Granddaddy would sometimes spit on his shoes as he polished them to bring them to a high luster. And I would spit on my shoes as well, because that's what granddaddy did.

Afterwards we would retire to the dining room table to do our "lessons." That's what he called reading and studying the bible passages we would review the next day in Sunday School. I would have much rather watched television, but granddaddy said we had to study for church. "But why do we have to read all that?" I would ask. "We'll be reading it again tomorrow." He would point out. "You need to be prepared."

As I write this column, we are three weeks into a *"Stay at Home"* order imposed by Mecklenburg County and the State as we wrestle with the physical and economic impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. The illness has already claimed thousands of lives here in America and could rage on for weeks to come.

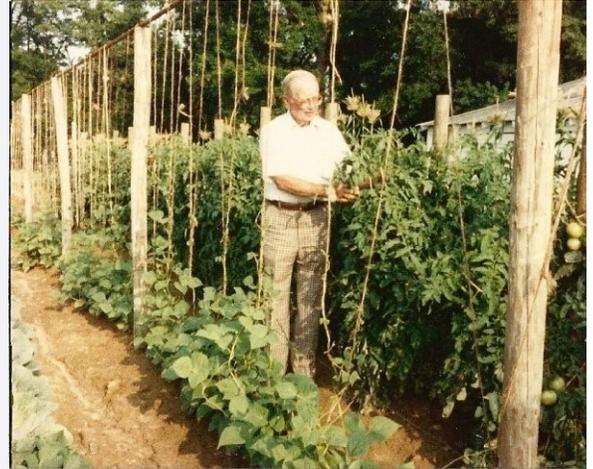
I am not sure anyone in the world foresaw the severity of this outbreak and there is no question our federal and state agencies were unprepared. As grave as this issue may be, I do believe we can emerge from it a much better community and nation.

Few of us will ever face a crisis as dire as this event unfolding before us. While the community, country and world are filled with anxiety and fear, there are many who are emerging as leaders. Not just the healthcare workers and first responders on the front lines, but everyday Americans looking to lend a helping hand. Whether it's as simple as donating to a cause or delivering food and other essentials to those in need, our community is pulling together!

This temporary pause also gives each of us time to reflect on what is important not only in our business but in our personal lives. Each of us can use this time to reprioritize goals and set new objectives. A great many of us have discovered new technologies to communicate with clients and friends which we not have previously utilized.

But the biggest opportunity may be the opportunity to be the person you can be after the pandemic and not the person you were going to be.

As a little boy, I could not have imagined that a virus could single handedly stop the American economy and hold our nation hostage. But perhaps this is the moment in time Sir Winston Churchill spoke about. An opportunity when we are called upon to be our absolute best - and a time when we dare not fail in that task.



Granddaddy Russell Working in his garden.



W.E. "Bill" Russell, CCE, IOM
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LOVE

Knowing Where You Are Matters

One morning while jog-walking (running is not my favorite thing, and for the record, skipping is faster and more fun) on the beach I turned around and began walking backwards ...

I noticed my footprints in the sand and a thought occurred to me:

There is a chance that this mark I'm making will be here long enough for someone else to see. If they do, they won't know if I was going forward or backwards.

No one knows where you are at in your journey.

We can not guarantee who can see our impact, when they will see it, or if they will at all.

Sometimes moving forward can look like you're going backwards. Likewise, sometimes you can look like you're going forward when in fact you are going backwards.

It's vital that you are aware of where you are and in which direction you are headed. Someone may come across your footsteps and assume they know which way you were going. That person may feel the need to correct you, redirect you, or even judge you... Take their words and actions with a grain of sand.

They don't know where you are in your journey, or where you were when they got to see a piece of it. Be cautious of the impact you allow them to have in your world today and tomorrow, based on something they've gotten to see in the past.

The fact is, you can't see a footprint in the sand, until after you've picked up your foot... and moved on.



A certified John Maxwell coach and speaker, as well as the COO for Collaborative Solutions Group, Christina Bartolotta is truly passionate about growth, development, and executing with excellence. Having played a major role in turning around several businesses throughout multiple industries, Christina is known for her consistency, process development, implementation, and genuine desire to help others. This mother of two young boys, wife, co-founder of a 501(c)(3) charity and the supervising editor for FLAME, continues to be committed to being a major player in creativity, development, and innovation relative to human capital and operational dynamics.

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How To Keep Moving Forward in/Through a Pandemic

We are living in interesting times. And that may be an understatement. Scratch that. It is an understatement.

What we are collectively going through right now is an unprecedented experience. Granted, there have been global pandemics that have occurred before on this earth, yet this hasn't happened in most of our lifetimes (shout out to those who are 102 and older!).

That being said, I ask you: How are you holding up? How are you truly doing?

I've had the fortune and honor of speaking to so many over the last several weeks who are handling it, well, uniquely. Yet even in everyone's uniqueness, there are some underlying themes that I have been seeing (and not in any particular order!).

1. This too shall pass.
2. I don't know what to do with all this time!
3. There's so much opportunity to learn and grow from this.
4. This is scary and has my anxiety up like no one's business!
5. I think I'm going stir crazy!!

And that's just a partial list. You see, the truth of the matter is that whatever you are feeling and experiencing at this time, it's ok. It's fine. There is no right or wrong right now. Which is both weird and liberating. And so psychologist of me to say! But it's true. None of us have been through this, and so none of us have the golden ticket on how best to deal with this. We are all in the same boat together.

So what do we do while we're in this boat together? Well, while there is no one particular way to deal with this pandemic, there are some sure fire ways that can be helpful moving forward. Check them out:

1. Meditation - take some time to build up your quiet time practice. You've heard so much about the practice of meditation, and I know you're curious, so go ahead and get on it. And the FREE Insight Timer app can really help you cultivate this. Calm is another good one.
2. Write - journal, or even begin to write that book you've been dreaming about. Or if you've started to write a book, now's the time to really delve and dive deeper into it.
3. Play - that's right, I said it. Take this time to have fun, enjoy yourself, your family, your loved ones. Get outside if you can, spend some time in the beautiful spring sun soaking up some of those delicious Vitamin D rays! Exercise, move around, create a TikTok with yourself and/or your family. What better time than now to bond with each other! Oh, and try out the Houseparty app to connect with family and friends...you can also play games together while hanging out (such as trivia, Heads Up, or a drawing game), which is really cool!
4. Rest - catch up on that sleep you've been wanting. Or catch up on that Netflix series you've been wanting to binge. Read those books you've been wanting to read. Whatever you do, just take advantage of this time to chill out!
5. Boost your immune system - take lots of Vitamins C, D, Zinc, some pro- and pre-biotics, and hydrate!! Drink plenty of water, and try to lay off the sugars :)

Connect - with yourself AND your loved ones. That means do some introspective work. Take inventory of the areas in your life where you are struggling or could use some extra help, and also take some time to pat yourself on the back and commend you for the areas where you are crushing life. A Wheel of Life is a helpful tool for this. Also, connect with your friends, family, loved ones, or people you haven't spoken to in a long time. Online platforms, our phones (I know, surprise!!) allow us to do this with ease. And while it's not the same as connecting in person, it's A way. So stop making excuses and saying you're not a techie. Start practicing now, because as we are seeing, this could easily become the way of the future.

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How To Keep Moving Forward in/Through a Pandemic

So there you have it. I truly hope this helps you as you cope through these strange times indeed. Know that we are all in this together, and we've got your back. We have to have each other's backs. No one is immune to this, and no one is not impacted by this. It's a collective experience in which there can be a lot of growing and learning from as we move forward. Know that we WILL get through this. Whatever happens, I truly wish you and yours to be healthy and safe during this time and beyond.



Dr. Damon Silas is an entrepreneur, a healer, and an artist who tackles the subjects of mental health, personal development and professional growth with a dynamic twist. A former contractor with the military and DC school system employee, he has used the challenges he has witnessed and experienced in order to help countless others to increase and improve their healing and growth process exponentially. A two-time published author (with another on the way), radio and podcast host ('A Mental Health Mixtape' which can be found on the WDRB radio station on iHeart radio as well as on iTunes; and 'From Mourning to ACTION' out on iTunes), and hip-hop dance instructor, this father of 2 fur babies and husband is originally from the Boston area and loves calling NC home now. and improve their healing and growth process exponentially. A two-time published author (with another on the way), radio and podcast host ('A Mental Health Mixtape' which can be found on the WDRB radio station on iHeart radio as well as on iTunes; and 'From Mourning to ACTION' out on iTunes), and hip-hop dance instructor, this father of 2 fur babies and husband is originally from the Boston area and loves calling NC home now.

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enjoy
the
little
things

APPRECIATION

Support Your Business Well by Supporting Yourself

How is your business being impacted by Covid-19? Are you open? Are customers still buying? Is all of this forcing you to shut down?

These are times like no one has ever seen before. People are being told to stay home. Restaurants and churches are empty. Gyms and sporting events shut down. Grocery store shelves are often sparse. People don't know how long their jobs will last.

There are many experts offering support for getting your business through this season, however long it ends up being. They are telling you to G.A.S.P.

Get online

Adjust

Shift

Pivot

Zoom, anyone?

That's all well and good, very needed in fact. If your business is supporting you, your clients, and employees God has strategies for you in this season. Do what He leads you to do to support your business.

But what about you? How are YOU?

Getting your business through this season is important. You are evaluating everything about your business, what is working, what needs to shift. As unseen problems are surfacing, there is more pressure, more unknown, and perhaps more decisions than ever before. I am grateful for all the support for businesses right now.

To be candid, my expertise is supporting you; the heart and soul of your business. If you don't get through this, your business has been done a great disservice. The people who rely on you for your leadership, your accountability, your flexibility and who see you as a part of their own stability... they don't get what they need.

You've likely heard the term, "put the mask on yourself first." Well, this is a reminder to do just that. Breathe.

How are you holding up to all of it?

Here are 3 simple, but effective ways to support yourself well, so that you can support your business

TAKE STOCK

We are in uncharted waters. We didn't see this coming. We need time to adjust. Let's take a step back from being in it, so that you can evaluate the situation and work on it. Ask yourself a few questions, and take the time to write down the answers.

What was working well?

What issues have hit you out of the blue?

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Support Your Business Well by Supporting Yourself

What about your relationships, how are they? This is for the people closest to you and your business associates. Make a list of names and really take a look at where you are, what you know about them, and how you can improve 1 thing between you. That can be the way you respond to them asking a question. It can be as simple as making them laugh. Relationships are vital, and any crisis is an opportunity for leaders to shine.

What have you learned about yourself that you would like to change?

What strengths both personally and in the business have you discovered?

Understanding that what was perceived as “normal” has been destroyed. Yet, the hope of most people, is for things to return to that normal. Is that what you want?

What part of normal do you want to return to?

What do you want your new normal to be?

GRIEVE

Even if your business is doing well and you are excited about the future you have things to grieve. Allow yourself to do that. So much has been taken from us. There is a loss of freedom for everyone. Loss of plans and dreams, no matter how small. Each loss big and small needs to be grieved in order to move on in healthy ways.

PLAN TO MOVE FORWARD

If you can't see tomorrow coming, then it's difficult to see beyond the moment.

What support do you need to live the life you want to live?

What do you need in order to be the person who can lead your business into the future, whatever that looks like?

Do you need new skills?

Do you need new tools?

Do you think it might be time for a coach?

Do you need to be more active in an on-line community?

Taking care of yourself is vital. You being healthy and strong both mentally and emotionally is key to your business thriving in any economy, but especially in the uncertain times we're in right now. You can do this. We can help.

<https://www.mukkovejohnson.com/support-yourself>



Mukkove Johnson is a certified Christian Life Coach specializing in Childhood Emotional Neglect Recovery and healing emotional wounds through prayer. She lives in Alaska with her husband of 25 years and their four children. The oldest is 20 and the youngest is 2. She has written 3 books. Her latest book, *Mess to Majesty: Let God Love You in Your Mess*, was a #1 new release on Amazon. Connect with Mukkove at

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MOTIVATION

How to fill you marketing sails with wind

When I was younger, I spent many of my weekends during the summer sailing with my Dad. He had a Lightning (for those of you unfamiliar a Lightning is a 19ft, 3 man sailboat <http://bit.ly/xlcbwn>). We didn't just go out for a leisurely sail, we raced in a circuit with the goal of sailing in the North American Championship.

The weekend long races are called regattas. The first race began early on a Saturday morning and the last race ended Sunday afternoon. My Dad loved to sail and loved the competition. On Friday night the boats would come rolling up to the yacht club that was hosting the regatta and the gear would get unpacked. This was my Dad's favorite time because he could scope out the competition, their boats, the sails and crew. He wanted to make sure that he understood what he was up against the next morning. Like many other sports, we competed against the same boats and skippers regatta after regatta, so my Dad made sure to talk with the other skippers to understand their philosophy about the race.

The morning before the first race, he would get out on the water long before the other boats to read the wind and the lake that we were competing on. He check out the starting line and make sure he knew where our boat needed to be to position ourselves for the best possible start. He knew from past experience where the other skippers might position their boats and he wanted to find his niche. At the starting gun there were at least 15 boats vying for the best spot on the line. The gun would go off and we were racing!

For those of you who are sailors or have sailed before, you know that during the time you are on the water, the wind shifts and if you are racing, you have to be able to react to that change. You have to alter your course. So we would take a tack and then have to alter course dependent on the wind throughout the race. Sometimes we would make the right decision, when the other boats did not and we would be flying. Other times, we miss read the wind and the pack would pass us by. The best skippers looked past the immediate wind pattern to where the wind might be and steadily progressed throughout the race. There were skippers who just made the moves with the current winds and were confounded when that puff would run out and the rest of us would go sailing by.

Every weekend was a challenge to do well enough to make it to the end goal of the North American Championships. The skippers and boats that made it in the end were the ones that understood their boat, knew their competition and made the most steady, consistent choices during each regatta. They looked at each race and measured what they did right and what they did wrong and learned from it. The boats that went out without a plan went home disappointed. They might win a race or two, but most never won the regatta or made it to the championship.

Now you may ask, what's all of this have to do with marketing, Laura? Marketing a business is exactly like sailboat racing! Before you begin a marketing activity (tactic), you have to have a strategy for your whole business. You need to understand what is unique about your business (your boat). You have to understand who you are competing against and how they market their business. You have to understand your ideal client (in sailing the wind). You have to position yourself to be first! Then you can choose your tactic or marketing activity (the tack during the race) and continuously alter it until you are getting your desired results.



"Concise", "Relevant", and "Passionate" all accurately describe Laura Lorenz. Ms. Lorenz is a high energy, accomplished speaker and facilitator focused on small business marketing strategies and tactics. With over 25 years' experience as a marketing and sales coach, Ms. Lorenz intimately understands the necessity of having both the right strategies and the proper tools to grow a small business. Laura has been in the trenches working as a team member, hand in hand, to develop and implement results-driven strategies with companies nationwide. Laura believes not only in the importance of teaching the principal knowledge of sales and marketing, but, more importantly, she keenly understands the need to deliver programs which are easy to implement.

"Recently, I had the pleasure of attending Laura's "Marketing Boot Camp" workshop. Laura is wonderful at delivering information"

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EMPATHY



Sometimes You Need to Climb the Mountain

I've spent most of my life as a person of faith. Over the course of my life, I listen to many people pour into me a life perspective of having enough faith to move mountains. The Word of God says that if you would have that of a mustard seed, you could tell a mountain to move. The message behind the verse is that with faith, we can move mountains. I have seen this happen metaphorically and witnessed within my own life the reality of things being pushed out of my way. I've seen my path become clear when I've applied faith and belief to my efforts. What I'd like to say here is this message is not meant to contradict or challenge the Word of God, or the lifestyle I've adopted for nearly three decades. My hope is that it might provide another level of insight.

Your faith MAY be strong enough to move mountains, but perhaps instead of wishing to avoid the obstacles in front of you, you might just need to go through them ...

We often swerve our vehicle to avoid that which is in front of us, or turn our body to ensure we do not collide with another person walking the opposite direction of us, and these everyday occurrences have likely caused a natural reaction to most conflict and areas of struggle to be avoided in our lives.

Growth takes place outside of our comforts zones, and what comes out of struggle is often convenience.

You can not see the view from atop the summit if you do not climb, struggle, push, extend and stretch yourself. You may be capable of telling the mountain to move out of your way, or have the means to go around it, but what lies within the journey of actually going through it, and traveling over it will always cause you to reach heights in your life that you would likely never experience otherwise.

We often rise to an occasion when we have one before us, and when a challenge, or up hill experience is lying between us and that which we desire, our first instinct might be to try and have that mountain moved. Oftentimes we see pain and struggle as something to avoid, but what if we looked at that obstacle and thought "we don't have to go up that mountain, we get to go up that mountain." Yes, we get the opportunity of perhaps a lifetime to elevate ourselves and see the world and the future of our journey from an angle impossible to get from any perspective other than the summit. When we rise up, we get a chance to stay up and move from a place with less vision. When we reach a summit, we are able to see down the path, ahead and somehow for me, this is almost that of looking into the future and seeing not only where I can be, but where I will one day be. The fuel that fills my mind, body, and soul from this altitude along with the vision of what can be, empowers my efforts to that of what will be.

That perspective will likely not come without some pain. That vantage point doesn't just show you something new, and allow you to see things differently. The process that you had to go through to get there, that is building another version of you. It is the growing and the stretching, the pain and the moments of not knowing if or when or how you might go on that show you pieces of yourself that are vital for your next steps. You get to see pieces of other



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Sometimes You Need to Climb the Mountain

people differently too. When you reach the top, and you realize you did not quit, and you reflect on those moments that moved you, the ones that stretched you, and the ones that almost broke you... Then, you see that you have conquered this mountain, and from the top of it you can see so much more than you thought you would; somewhere around that moment, you will also realize that you aren't done walking yet.

Today I challenge you to dig deep, stand tall, chart the course before you, and be mindful of the potholes along the way, the valleys that will cause you delay, but pay close attention to the mountains that are placed between you and your goals. What you will see from the position of a summit will expand your horizon, and usher in a perspective that may just give you a deeper and more defined vision for the path and journey of your life and call.

Make a decision to do this is step ZERO!
Taking ACTION, and climbing is STEP ONE!



Titus Bartolotta is the founder, president, and lead consultant for Collaborative Solutions Group, the founder of The Lotta Foundation, and Co-Founder and President of Business Leaders Unleashed. Originally from New York City, Titus has spent the majority of his life in North Carolina. Titus studied business management at York Technical College in SC, along with having completed both culinary arts, and semi-nary training. Having worked as a manager & executive for several companies ranging from small to large businesses, Titus has spent the better part of his life staying teachable and gathering knowledge at every stop of his career. It was in the city of Charlotte NC, that Titus met his wife Christina. Today the Bartolotta family works to raise their two beautiful young boys Josiah, and Noah.

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LEADERSHIP



Technology and the Art of GREAT Customer SUPPORT

Do you provide Customer Service or Customer Support?

Let's think about those two words for a minute. To SERVE is to give. You give your time, your knowledge, and you give your effort. SUPPORT is enablement and empowerment. You are providing the means for someone to function and perform. You are enabling someone to be successful at the tasks they have in front of them.

Customer Service

- Answering Questions
- Responding to problems as they occur

Customer Support

- Troubleshooting Problems and understanding the root cause – not just treating the symptoms
- Providing actionable information so that the situation can be avoided in the future
- Monitoring and Proactively alerting customers to situations that could cause problems

True Customer Support at its best means that you are as invested in the success of your client attaining their goals as they are and are more of a teammate and partner in that success than just a simple service call.

Website Tools for GREAT Customer Support

1. **Support Ticketing System** – support tickets aren't just for tech companies. Any business can adapt one to work into their workflows and that's the important part. For it to work, a company has to use it. You have to make it easy for everybody that has client contact to start a ticket so that the person with the issue doesn't get passed around while your business figures out who the correct person should be to handle the issue. Empower the front-line staff to start the ticket and build a process to evaluate and traffic each ticket to the appropriate person for resolution. Let customers start tickets via email. Make it easy for your customers to tell you what they need. The best systems track time, send reminders to the stakeholders, and allow management visibility into where things stand through simple reporting.
2. **Support documentation** – This is an area where many small businesses are lacking. You're your customers need information, they aren't necessarily having that need when you are open for business. So how do you help them in off-hours. Your customers need to be productive on their schedule not yours. So having strong documentation of processes, procedures, and "how-to" information is invaluable to your customer. Keep in mind that not everybody learns the same way so don't build help documentation in only one format. Allow your customers to choose between written instructions and video tutorials where appropriate. Don't just tell you customers how to engage with your products and services, show them.
3. **Chatbots** – Chat started out as a way to allow another way for support staff to handle multiple issues at the same time. It then evolved to a point where it was viewed as a way to automate support requests and offload some of the burden from over worked support personnel. Nothing replaces in-person communication with your customer. But people aren't always available 24/7 or maybe its not economically feasible to have people available at all hours. Modern chatbots help bridge the gap between a support ticketing system and your support documentation. The bot allows the customer to put their needs into words and to see if there is help available to them in the documentation that already exists. If the information isn't available it can route the question to a person who doesn't have to come into the "conversation" cold and make a customer walk through the same steps, it's already laid out on the screen. If a person isn't available, the best chat systems can be set up to interact with the support ticketing system and create a new ticket.



Technology and the Art of GREAT Customer SUPPORT

Nothing Replaces Direct Contact with Your Customer

While I understand the concept of economics, the drive to remove people from the support process through automation of repetitive requests and the development of new “more efficient” communication processes has never made sense to me. Customers don’t choose to work with you because you have the best support bot.

No bot, no video, no support ticket, no other form of customer support will ever replace the value a real live human being can bring to a support situation. Empathy and compassion don’t communicate well across a ticket or a chat bot. Plus, handled properly, every client touch, even support requests can be an opportunity for Upsell and Cross-sell, or an opportunity to collect a testimonial.

The key to great support is people. It will always be people, so long as your customer is a person. But technology can help make the process of giving and receiving support a better one for every person involved.



Matt Swanson is the owner and founder of [MS Digital Solutions](#), a digital marketing agency that focuses on helping businesses make the most of their digital footprint. 15 years in the media industry and experience a variety of marketing roles has prepared Matt for helping businesses understand the possibilities and processes of a strong digital presence. Matt is married to Jen, his wife of 19, and together they have 1 son, Ryan, and live in Mooresville NC.

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Stop, Take a Look Around, and Practice Gratitude

Practicing Gratitude when it's the last thing you want to do.

"Why should I practice being grateful right now?! There's nothing to be grateful for."

"I've lost my job, business, my paycheck, there's no way to pay my bills, and I don't know how we're going to eat."

Look, I hear you. No one said this would be easy. And that's precisely why I say this is the perfect time for you to start practicing taking note of all you do have to be thankful for.

Because you do. I know. And not in a, 'I know because I've been stalking you and/or reading your mind.' That's creepy.

More so in an 'I know because you're reading this article and therefore at least have access to a computer or digital device, have internet, and can read.' If that's already not a lot to be thankful for, you're going to give me a run for my money, and I'm ok with that. Challenge accepted!

Either way, let's truly take a moment to notice all of the things around us for which we can be grateful. Right now, we are in the height of spring, which means the flowers are in full bloom, your allergies are likely kicking into high gear (wait, should we be thankful for that?!), and the birds are singing loudly. There are all sorts of living creatures out and about, loving and appreciating their existence. Take a moment to do the same. For theirs AND your existence.

And even if things 'seem' to be bad for you, know that this is not to undermine the reality of all of that. It's just to note that like attracts like. When you are in a state of anger, disgust, unappreciation, you will most likely only be able to see those things that confirm those emotions for you.

Yet when you are in a state of joy, love, and appreciation, you will attract things into your life that elicit those emotions. That allows you to see the beauty in all. And from that space, you can create peace.

Yet most importantly, from the place of gratitude, life just seems to flow better, more easily, more naturally. And then you can create. Truthfully, we're all creating our own realities right now. It is all about our mindset.

Case in point. I was watching a special on TV the other night about the incredible magician David Blaine. Now, I don't know about you, but if you've ever seen him perform any one of his tricks, your mind more than likely has been blown...multiple times!

But I got to thinking the other night he has to create his own reality. This is a reality that is attainable to any one of us. Yet because of whatever he has studied about the laws of physics and manifestation, he is really tapped into it. To the point where simply by him manifesting those weird outcomes (I mean, to use cards to figure out someone's phone password?! Come on!) results in other people being witness and in awe to it. Which tells me anything is possible. And so if anything is possible AND we get to create it, why couldn't we create a space of gratitude, which then leads to greater joy, excitement, peace, and possibilities?

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Stop, Take a Look Around, and Practice Gratitude

So take a moment to look around and take note of all of the things you are grateful in this moment. Hint: if you can actually look around, don't forget to be thankful for your eyesight :)

And if you are anything like me, you grew up hearing 'be grateful because there are kids in Africa who are starving.' Well, I'd change that perspective to something a little closer to home. There are kids and families here, some possibly in your backyard, starving, struggling to makes ends meet. So take this moment to truly be thankful, and then share some of that joy with your neighbor who might benefit from your gratitude!



Dr. Damon Silas is an entrepreneur, a healer, and an artist who tackles the subjects of mental health, personal development and professional growth with a dynamic twist. A former contractor with the military and DC school system employee, he has used the challenges he has witnessed and experienced in order to help countless others to increase and improve their healing and growth process exponentially. A two-time published author (with another on the way), radio and podcast host ('A Mental Health Mixtape' which can be found on the WDRB radio station on iHeart radio as well as on iTunes; and 'From Mourning to ACTION' out on iTunes), and hip-hop dance instructor, this father of 2 fur babies and husband is originally from the Boston area and loves calling NC home now. and improve their healing and growth process exponentially. A two-time published author (with another on the way), radio and podcast host ('A Mental Health Mixtape' which can be found on the WDRB radio station on iHeart radio as well as on iTunes; and 'From Mourning to ACTION' out on iTunes), and hip-hop dance instructor, this father of 2 fur babies and husband is originally from the Boston area and loves calling NC home now.

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MINDSET



Get Motivated: Five Ways You Can Make Your Business Better This Month!

COVID-19 has many business owners feeling stuck in a period of “suspended animation” - nobody is sure what the future holds, and as a result, it’s challenging to continue moving forward with your business.

The truth is, there is a WHOLE LOT you can do right now to strengthen your business, no matter how drastically you’ve been impacted by this economic slowdown.

Here are five ideas to consider:

1) Invest into relationships with key customers, clients, and referral sources. Make a list of your customers, referral sources, partners, vendors, and other important relationships. Then dedicate just one hour each week to working that list. Call them on the phone, ask how they’re doing, ask how their family is doing, ask them if there’s anything you can do to support them. This investment into your key relationships will pay dividends for years to come!

2) Audit and update your website.

Is your messaging up-to-date? Are the services and products that you’ve listed still accurate? Do your forms and links still work? Is your blog current? Do you have a “Lead Magnet” that you give away in order to capture contact information? Is the design still fresh and relevant? Many business owners neglect their website once it’s been launched, and this is a great opportunity to make sure it’s current, accurate, and effective.

3) Create marketing content for use down the road.

The number-one excuse I hear for why business owners can’t create marketing content is “I’m too busy.” Well, here’s your chance. Create a Video FAQ series, launch a podcast, produce a library of “Special Reports,” or finally write that book you’ve been talking about forever. These are valuable assets that will benefit your business for years after coronavirus is a distant memory.

4) Launch an email newsletter.

I’ve been saying for years that a regular email newsletter is one of the easiest, most cost-effective marketing tactics available to business owners. It’s truly low-hanging fruit, and yet so many businesses don’t have one. Platforms like MailChimp make it easy and very affordable to get started - and now you’ve got the time to make it happen! (Watch [this video](#) for tips on how to get started.)

5) Keep marketing and keep selling!

The best thing you can do today - for your business, your family, your customers, and our economy - is to keep generating revenue for your business. Keep money circulating. Keep providing paychecks to your employees, keep paying your vendors, keep generating tax revenue, keep the economy as healthy as possible. That means you need to KEEP MARKETING and KEEP SELLING. You need to be creative in the ways that you engage with your customers right now. You probably need to pivot - but please don’t STOP.

COVID-19 is what it is. We don’t have to like it, but it’s our reality. Even though life and business has been disrupted, there is a whole lot you can do THIS MONTH to move your business forward. Let’s make it happen!



Danny Decker is a speaker, author, podcast host, and marketing coach for ambitious entrepreneurs. His book, [Marketing Simplified](#), is available on Amazon.com and through other retailers. Subscribe to the Marketing Simplified Podcast on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), or [Google Play](#). To learn more about Danny, and to access a wealth of FREE marketing tips and strategies, visit www.DannyDeckerMarketing.com.

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The image features a black background with intricate, flowing patterns of light blue and purple, resembling flames or smoke. The patterns are dynamic and layered, creating a sense of movement and depth. In the bottom left corner, there is white text.

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