Fresh starts

Be a better leader in tough times
Reopen safely and profitably
New ideas and clever pivots

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A wrinkle in time

There’s nothing like a crisis to change the agenda. Think back to what your major concerns were just twelve weeks ago. While no doubt important and reasonable, they were likely conceived through a lens of prosperity, safety and security. What a difference a pandemic makes. Everything’s been shaken up, turned inside out and generally screwed up by something so tiny you can’t even see it.

In a very short period of time, the rug has been pulled out from under our lives. The sudden loss of people we love has been a tragedy, and the worry about basics like reliable income, food supplies and vacant and inept political leadership has been stressful. It’s one of those messages the universe sends you from time to time: You might think you’re in control with your Trello boards, your annual OKRs and your commitment to seizing the lead in today’s SoulCycle session, but I got news for you. All change my friend, all change.

In our podcast and weekly newsletter we’ve run daily coverage of the crisis, sharing the stories of as many of our audience as we’ve been able, and trying to unpack the shock, emotions and ways people are adapting and pivoting to survive. We also started to work on this issue by reminding ourselves of a few things we know to be true. Life will go on. This too shall pass. Our societies will adapt and thrive again. Like many a crisis before, we’ll emerge stronger and more capable.

Our job at Courier has always been to be much more than just a source of entertainment. We’re here to inspire and equip you with the tools and skills you need to forge your life on your own terms. What you hold in your hands is our response to Covid-19—a playbook for taking back control and, no matter what degree of disruption or tragedy you’ve experienced, ideas on what your next steps could look like. We’ve zeroed in on three key themes.

Leadership. Cities have the potential to bring out the very worst but also the very best in each of us. Those who can exercise good leadership, and then bring others along with them, will emerge as the heroes of our time. We’ve spent weeks speaking to experts and inspiring people from all walks to life to pull together a five-point guide on how to step up and forge a path of your own.

Sustainability. ‘A crisis is a terrible thing to waste’ the saying goes. While the jury’s still out as to whether climate change played a role in the outbreak, there’s no denying the societal shock of the pandemic is but a taste of what’s to come if we don’t get our shit together vis-a-vis the environment and sustainability. What many view a luxury right now in the face of massive job losses and bankruptcies we be seen as a given. As we rebuild, we have an incredible opportunity to reshape our society, our businesses and our lives in a way that stops harming the planet and better balances the forces of consumption and doing good.

Starting over. Whether your next chapter means rescuing or reformatting a business, finding a new career or starting a new venture, we’ve shared lessons and insights on how others are dealing with the challenge of reopening and moving towards a new normal.

Not for a minute do we have all the answers. But I hope what we’ve given you here might spark an idea or simply give hope that things will eventually right themselves and life will go on. It’s a painful period, a wrinkle thrown our way—but as ever, our futures are in our hands if we’re willing to step up and take the lead.

I wish you, your families and your loved ones the very best.

Until next issue,
Jeff
Inside...

Issue 35
June/July 2020

On the cover
Ifigeneia Filopoulou and Vasilis Nzeremes at their Athens plant shop Kopría.

Photography: Marco Arguello

Now

20 Coffee as software, people counting
22 Trends to watch, rapid hydration
24 Psychedelic compounds
26 Electric bikes, reaching inbox zero
28 Good packaging, bread-tech
29 Courier Weekly updates

Briefings

32 Five ways to be a leader in challenging times
48 How to reopen (or simply start from scratch)

Comment

64 Columns from Mark Emil Hermansen, Kim Pham, Ravneet Gill, Juan Diego Gerscovich, Tijana Tamburic, Marty Bell and Fleur Emery. Book extracts from David Sax and Tom Cheesewright.

Workflow

76 Build a regenerative business
77 Incorporate social goals into strategy
78 Open a zero-waste store
79 Improve product development
80 Learn about worker co-ops
82 Introduce eco office hacks
86 Ask the investors
87 Manage the entire supply chain
88 Grow slow
89 Learn key sustainability terms
90 Startup Diary: Elizabeth Haigh

Life

94 Life in lockdown with a jewellery designer in Greece, a composer in Los Angeles, a dog trainer and yoga teacher in London, and an Australian chef and restaurateur.

+ Catalog

70+ Products for your wardrobe, home & body

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June/July 2020 is all about…

DECISIONS UNDER STRESS

RUTHLESS OBJECTIVITY

NEUROSCIENCE

GOING ZERO WASTE

SEED TO BAR

MANAGING DOUBT

ANTARCTIC AIRDROPS

FRESH STARTS

WORKER COOPERATIVES

GUUS HIDDINK

Taking responsibility…

YEMENI COFFEE

THE ART OF REOPENING

‘GREEN SWANS’

FUTURE PROOFING

PERMANENT PIVOTS

FEED TO BAR

RECOVERY ROUTINES

DIY

BOOSTING YOUR EQ

BECOMING A STOIC

ECO OFFICES

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY
US-born restaurateur Camden Hauge runs a growing group of restaurants, wine bars and cafes in Shanghai – including Egg, Bitter XIII, and Bird (pictured here). In April, she expanded the mini-empire further with the highball and konbini-focused shop Lucky Mart.
ØsterGRO is an urban farm and restaurant on a rooftop in Østerbro, Copenhagen. When lockdown came into effect, it had to completely shut down. For co-founders Kristian Skaarup and Livia Haaland, having savings to dip into was crucial for keeping the business afloat. 'Still, social-distancing is a huge problem, because gathering people together is what we do,' says Skaarup. 'But when this blows over, we know we’ll still have our community to support us.'
In 2014, Scott James began roasting specialty coffee from his garage in Ammanford, Wales. He went on to buy a derelict coalshed and transformed it into a coffee shop, cafe and roastery called Coaltown, which became one of the first B-Corp-certified coffee companies in the UK. Lockdown meant closing down the cafe, but the downtime has allowed Coaltown to re-focus on other areas of the business like website upgrades and personalised coffee subscriptions.
Coffee as software
Eating in
Promotional products
People counting
Productivity Trends to watch
Rapid hydration
Camels
Sober support
Inbox zero
Electric bikes
Psychedelic compounds
Good packaging
Bread-tech
Move to Austin
Heavy metal marketing
NEW PRODUCTS

COFFEE AS SOFTWARE

Taika is a new adaptogenic coffee brand (@taika) launched in May by Michael Sharon, a veteran of Facebook’s mobile product division, and Kalle Freese, co-founder of Sudden Coffee. We caught up with San Francisco-based Sharon to find out more.

Q How’d you get into good coffee?
A At Facebook I turned into one of those insufferable snobs who would come to your house and tell you how you’re pouring coffee wrong. I managed to invest a tiny bit of money into Blue Bottle Coffee, which got me even more interested. And later I discovered compounds like L-theanine – taken with coffee it gives you a calm, clear focus.

Q What’s Taika about?
A We’re trying to expand the specialty coffee universe, which takes itself too seriously. I’m the biggest fan of third wave coffee, but there was no way I’d contribute something new by building a third wave coffee shop. With Taika, we made a conscious decision to stay away from the proven, heritage, old timey tropes. We wanted to make something modern. Our route to market is very different to most CPG companies. My background is in software and I spent a lot of time working on A/B testing tools and beta testing. Until now, we’ve been running Taika like a private beta. Since we started, it’s been available if you had our phone number – you could just text us. I don’t understand how anybody does it any other way, because we got so much feedback.

Q And you’ve put a phone number on the can, too…
A That was actually Kalle’s phone number. When you text it, you have an experience with the brand. We have a bunch of funny responses and each one sets you off on a different track. We spend a lot of time bantering with people and at some point, maybe 20 texts later, it will be like, ‘Okay, so how do I get the coffee?’ The co-packer we’re working with is very different to most in the beverage industry, in that usually you’d need to produce a minimum of a huge amount of cases, but we’re able to produce much smaller amounts and iterate pretty fast. We’ve iterated on everything – the copy, name and brand (we’ve had like three different brands).

FOOD TRENDS

EATING IN

With restaurant options in many countries still limited to takeaways, the at-home cooking sector is having a renaissance. Here are three niche areas that might benefit.

01. Meal kits have surged, but so have pre-prepped, meal services such as Gobble (@gobbleinc), Freshly (@freshly) and the plant-based Allplants (@allplants), in which most of the hard work (chopping, slicing) has already been done. On the Courier Daily podcast, Allplants’ cofounder Jonathan Petrides said he had to hire more chefs to keep up with demand.

02. Tailor-fit for this era are recipe-centric food media platforms such as Food52 (@food52) and Tastemade (@tastemade), as well as budding food stars on social channels, like TikTok, YouTube and Instagram Live.

03. According to Nielsen, 85% of Chinese consumers say they’ll continue shopping for groceries and essentials online post-pandemic. Will everyone else follow suit?

BRAND WATCH

MERCHERY

WHAT IS IT?
‘Promotional products made sustainable.’ Most corporate swag is ugly, plastic and poor-quality junk that ends up at the bottom of your drawer or – worse – in a landfill. Merchery flips the script with sustainable candles, tote bags, cookies, hoodies, cacti and more – in essence, the sort of products that you’d actually want to buy.

WHO FOUND IT?
Brussels-based Benot Fortpied and Simon Polet

WHEN DID IT LAUNCH?
February 2020

WHO TO FOLLOW?
@merchery.co

PRODUCTIVITY TOOL

GET CENTERED

Working from home has either turned you into a productivity ninja – or the opposite. That’s why Centered (@centered_app) caught our eye. It’s a new task management app that incorporates mindfulness techniques into your workflow. The goal is to ‘empower you to stay focused’ – it blocks off uninterrupted time in your calendar, monitors other app usage while you work and lets you celebrate task completions and small wins.
REOPENING
LESSONS FROM PARIS

Roxanne Varza is director of Station F – the world's biggest startup campus in Paris.

Q What lessons have you learned since the pandemic started?
A In a crisis, timing is everything. Reacting quickly and effectively is important – but especially because what we do also impacts a lot of the organisations that rely on our services. When reopening Station F, there was a lot of information the government was slow to put in place. But my team had actually worked on a plan based entirely on common sense prior to any government announcements, and we were able to validate things quickly after they were announced. This has also been an excellent opportunity to re-evaluate, well, everything. We can reconnect with members of our community and take time to get feedback.

Q Any other silver linings?
A It’s reassuring to see that in times of crisis people naturally help each other. Seeing our community come together was inspiring and I ended up writing a letter to the Station F community encouraging our members to behave like we’re in crisis mode all the time. Obviously there are startups that have been positively impacted by the crisis and by confinement, but we’ve also seen a lot of companies impacted negatively leverage their existing resources and use their agility to pivot to new offers. Entrepreneurs don’t wait for things to get better, they act and act quickly. Here are some good examples:

MedGo, a workforce management tool for hospitals and healthcare centres, was already used in 1,200 establishments in France prior to Covid-19, for the purpose of replacement staff scheduling. This made them a top-of-mind partner for the ARS (France’s regional health agencies) to create a call for volunteers, quickly mobilise support, and assign people according to hospital needs thanks to its existing automated matching system.

R-Pur, a startup from our HEC Program, which usually makes masks for riders, moved quickly to producing masks for doctors, nurses and hospital staff. They’re now delivering masks to the public. Back Ada, a B2B marketplace for reusable building materials (one of Station F’s ‘Future 4G’, our 40 most promising startups of the year), had to shut down all their construction sites during the lockdown. They’re now looking to donate materials to participate in the construction of emergency shelters in public health institutions in the Paris region.

IN THE ZOO
GET OVER THE HUMP

The unicorn is dead. Long live the... camel? Even before Covid-19, failed IPOs and frothy startups raising eye-watering VC on questionable valuations were considered unsustainable. Now, as corporate resilience becomes key, the two-humped (and less-imaginary) animal is being hailed as a better model to follow. Rather than shoot for a $1bn valuation, successful startups should instead be able to survive without additional cash for months and adapt to different (sometimes harsh) climates.

HYDRATION

Your body needs fluids – especially before, during and after you work out – but chances are you’re not getting nearly enough. Founded in 2018 by Jai Jung Kim and John Sherwin, New York-based Hydrant (@drinkhydrant) sells rapid hydration sachets – a powdered blend of sodium, zinc, potassium and magnesium (plus caffeine and L-theanine in their Hydrant+ version), which you add to water. In early May the company raised a Series A of $5.7m.

TRENDS

2020 TRENDS TO WATCH

The 2020 edition of Wunderman Thompson Intelligence’s ‘The Future 100’ report – a must-read review on emerging consumer behaviour – originally dropped in January. They’ve since updated it with 20 global trends that have accelerated in the wake of the crisis – as well as five new ones. Check out the full report at intelligence.wundermanthompson.com

01 Optimistic futures
People and brands are making a concerted effort to seek out positivity.

02 Taming tech’s influence
Fighting fake news and misinformation has never been more crucial.

03 Protective tech, protective everything
People will continue to seek services that safeguard them from germs, viruses and pollutants.

04 New digital communities
There are opportunities for new online spaces to ‘facilitate genuine human connection’.

05 Privacy era
With the arrival of contact tracing, is privacy being sacrificed in the global fight against Covid-19?

06 Legacy preservation
Will the return of nature in former tourism hotspots lead to a more conscious approach?

07 Disaster-proof destinations
Sales of bunkers and disaster-proof shelters are on the rise.

08 The new super-creatives
From music to visual arts, digital creativity is in hyperdrive as more seek outlets under quarantine.

09 Unconventional brand actions
Some big companies are prioritising corporate social responsibility ahead of profit.

10 Future-proof ingredients
Sales of pantry staples are on the rise, from dried food and canned meat to frozen food.

11 Regenerative agriculture
As we reconsider our food supply, will consumers keep ordering direct from local, sustainable farms?

12 Skincare 2.0
Tech for ‘hyper-personalised’ skincare is being used to ‘elevate sanitisation’.

13 Anti-excess consumerism
Consumers are thinking twice before buying, considering their spend’s impact on the planet.

14 The new superstore
A new ‘hybrid business model’ is merging gourmet restaurants, corner stores and farm shares.

15 Health concierges
Companies from Amazon to Alibaba are promoting the health-first credentials of their products.

16 Wellness architecture
Spaces are being reshaped, from ‘one-way routing’ to markets based on 16-square grids.

17 Digital spas
‘Spas are opening virtual doors to connect with customers at home’.

18 Engineering companionship
In a time of isolation, tech brands will try and help you to build better relationships.

19 New payment gestures
Frictionless, contactless payments apps will reign supreme.

20 Gen Z finances
Teens and 20-somethings are entering the workforce during a recession.

6 new trends to watch

01 The new language of advertising
02 The gaming multiverse
03 Novel dining formats
04 Renewed faith
05 Gamescape travel
NOW  |  2524
NOW

INVESTMENT

3 RAISES IN A CRISIS

E-scooters promised a revolution in urban transport – a revolution we’re still waiting for. But with lockdowns easing around the world and more people avoiding public transport, another opportunity has presented itself. First, though, the industry must clean up its act – literally, Reilly Brennan tells Courier. Brennan is a founding partner at Trucks VC, a San Francisco-based venture capital firm that funds entrepreneurs looking at the future of transportation.

‘We’ve had a very low standard for what would be acceptable in terms of cleanliness,’ he says. In the context of a global pandemic, users want to be extra safe. ‘Shared scooter companies have been cleaning them more often. But as an end user, you want to know that you’re the first person to use it after it’s been cleaned. You don’t want to know it’s been cleaned within the last hour – that’s simply not good enough anymore. So there’s a big opportunity for a new layer of verification in the cleaning industry.’

FUTURE PLANNING

‘People will always need good, thoughtful furniture that lasts. But for us, knowing what the world will bring in two months is a lot more complicated than what the world will bring in five years.’
– Kyle Hoff, co-founder of DTC furniture brand Floyd

TRANSPORT

CLEAN UP YOUR ACT

ALCOHOL

SOBER SUPPORT

Launched last month with a $7.5m seed round is Monument (@joinmonument), an online treatment service for those who want to change their relationship with alcohol. The company was inspired by founder Mike Russell’s personal experience, which he recounted in a Medium post in January.

‘Was I addicted to alcohol? I didn’t know where I fit on the spectrum of people with alcohol use issues, or if I qualified at all. But I knew I wanted to stop drinking and needed help doing it,’ he wrote. The service he launched is both an online community offering peer support, and a platform for getting connected to affordable treatment with a physician and therapist, as needed.

BRAND WATCH

OMSOM

WHAT IS IT?
A freshly launched direct-to-consumer food brand that sells Vietnamese, Filipino and Thai ‘starters’ – pantry staples that pack ‘all the sauces, aromatics and seasonings that you need for a specific Asian dish’ – crafted by well-known chefs.

WHO FOUNDED IT?
Sisters Kim and Vanessa Pham

WHEN DID IT LAUNCH?
May 2020.

WHO TO FOLLOW?
@omson
Turn to p65 to read Kim Pham’s column.

TRANSPORT

RAIN CHECK

With travel stalled for the foreseeable future, how can hotels survive? New York-based Caitlin Zaino is founder of hotel concierge app Porter & Sail (@porterandsail).

When the crisis hit, the company lost almost all of its revenue, Zaino had to let go half of her staff, and the remaining team was focused on pivoting Porter & Sail’s core business model from the app to ‘hotel credits’ – vouchers for discounted rooms to be redeemed for a future trip. Today, the credits product is booming – hotel signups and sales of the vouchers are both surging. The question now, Zaino says, is: ‘Will consumers purchase at enough volume that this is a sustainable business? Will hotels want to continue to offer this when the landscape changes? And what does it all look like when the world opens up?’
Now with Helsinki-based interior stand desk created in collaboration a compact but adjustable sit-or-Made by Choice
market included the Fem desk from Other entrants to the WFH desk made from recycled cardboard. ‘StaytheF***Home Desk’ (pictured)
– an $85 build-it-yourself workstation
‘Turn off all email notifications. Phone, desktop, literally everywhere. You’ll be fine.’
– Naval Ravikant, co-founder of AngelList
‘If you can’t delete an email without flinching or responding, you won’t scale.’
– Kitze, Founder of React Academy

INVESTMENT
HEALTHCARE
Covid has had a massive impact on healthcare investments. One standout category is telehealth. According to CB Insights’ State of Healthcare Q1’20 Report, telehealth deals doubled from Q4’19, reaching a record high of 103 deals. Another bright spot was mental health startups, which raised a record $576m in Q1’20. And several startups focused on employee mental health closed $20m+ rounds.

EHF
DESKBOUND
Those with little experience of working from home realised fairly quickly during lockdown that their home office setups were severely lacking. Orders for desks from e-commerce furniture sites surged, leading to order backlogs and sellouts. Danish company Stykka (@stykka.labs), which specialises in custom-printing office furniture, quickly created the ‘StaytheF***’Home Desk’ (pictured) – an $85 build-it-yourself workstation made from recycled cardboard. Other entrants to the WFH desk market included the Fem desk from Made by Choice (@madebychoice), a compact but adjustable sit-or-stand desk created in collaboration with Helsinki-based interior architects Fyra (@fyradesignagency).

EMAIL
INBOX ZERO: A MYTH?
Popular myth has it that there are two types of people – those with 15,000 unread emails and those who are meticulous about cleansing their inbox every morning and night. The reality? There’s no ‘right’ way to do email – it’s all about what works for you. But it would help to check out a clever new site – inboxzero.ro, made by Italian developers and designers Fabrizio Rinaldi and Francesco Di Lorenzo. It’s a running compilation of tips, apps and workflows that show you how some of the most productive people manage their inbox, with helpful advice such as:

‘If you can’t delete an email without flinching or responding, you won’t scale.’
– Naval Ravikant, co-founder of AngelList
‘Turn off all email notifications. Phone, desktop, literally everywhere. You’ll be fine.’
– Kitze, Founder of React Academy

MICROMOBILITY
ELECTRIC-POWERED
Cowboy is a Brussels-based electric bike company (@cowboy_hq) founded in 2017 by Adrien Roose, Karim Slaoui and Tanguy Goretti. We spoke with Roose to find out whether e-bikes might take off as people avoid public transportation.

Q Are more people actually riding e-bikes at the moment?
A Our bike is connected to the user through a mobile app – that’s how we learn about our riders. And what we’ve seen over the last few weeks is quite interesting: the usage has actually doubled.

Q That’s huge.
A Two months ago, we faced a really high amount of uncertainty because our product was built to address commuting from home to work. As people stayed home and started working remotely, we wondered if they would use it at all. But instead of the peak usage being around rush hour in the morning and evening, it’s now spread across the day. People are still moving, just not necessarily to work.

Q Are you promoting electric bikes as a way to avoid going on the subway or Tube?
A People are rethinking the way they move about, and there’s certainly a fear around public transport. We’re at a crossroads: people can decide to rush back to their old habits and use cars even more than before, which was already at problematic levels, or we can embrace new and better solutions, like electric scooters and bikes.

Q But do you worry that, with remote working, usage will still be down overall?
A I tend not to have extreme views on the world! I think what’s going on right now is very temporary. No one really knows when the lockdown measures or social distancing practices will be completely over. Will it be the summer? Will it be in six months? Will it be in a year? I’m not going to get into that debate. But I think at some point people are going to go back to work. Maybe not the same way they used to, but I don’t think that offices will disappear.

Q How do you plan for the future during such uncertainty?
A You learn to plan better, and for multiple scenarios. It’s not about Plan A or Plan B – it’s about Plan A, Plan B, Plan C and Plan D. You have to be pretty radical about it.

Q What else have you learned?
A This is my first hardware startup involving heavy doses of manufacturing – and it’s so much more complex than I had ever imagined. But that’s what also makes it fun and interesting and exciting.

With school shutdowns and students forced to learn at home instead of in the classroom, education tech startups have seen an uptick. One such company is San Francisco-based Quizlet (@quizlet), which offers virtual flashcards and study guides, and recently raised $30m at a $1bn valuation.
MARKETING

LIQUID DEATH

Liquid Death (@liquiddeath) – the extremely self-aware, heavy metal-influenced, DTC water brand sold in recyclable aluminium cans – launched a tongue-in-cheek marketing campaign based on online hate comments about the brand. They released the 10-track album, Greatest Hates, on Spotify and YouTube with songs such as ‘Reconsider Your Life Choices’, ‘Dumbest Name Ever For Water’, and ‘Bad Marketing’.

Outside the Box

WHEN did you realise there was something you didn’t like about your packaging philosophy? What are you doing to reduce the amount of packaging you use, what you’re doing to help consumers know how to dispose of or reuse your packaging, where you want to go next, etc? What are the things that are still unsolved that you’re planning to work on?

Stephan Ango is co-founder and chief product officer of Lumi, a marketplace that connects companies with sustainable packaging solutions. We asked him about his new side project Slash Packaging (@slashpackaging), launched on Earth Day.

The idea is to have every brand or company have a page on their website at packaging. So, if you’re Nike, it would be nike.com/packaging. And on that page, you’d talk about your packaging philosophy: what you’re doing to reduce the amount of packaging you use, what you’re doing to help consumers know how to dispose of or reuse your packaging, where you want to go next, etc. What are the things that are still unsolved that you’re planning to work on?

There’s a huge shift in consumers who want to buy from companies that are thinking about these things, but they’re having a hard time finding this information. So, standardising around a URL sets up the expectation that if you’re buying from a company you can go straight to that URL and find useful information there. But it’s also for companies to learn from each other, to open-source their knowledge about what they’ve been doing and what’s worked. Everyone should be sharing this knowledge and making it easily available. If you go to slashpackaging.org, you can search for any company in the world and it will show you their listing and what they currently have on their packaging page – which, for the most part, is a 404 error. So we’ve made a helpful little tool: you can click on button and it will automatically pre-fill a tweet that says, ‘Hey, [company], you should consider adding a (packaging page to your website)’.

I’m hoping that in a year from now, for Earth Day 2021, we’ll have hundreds or thousands of companies in the directory.

CREATIVE AD CAMPAIGNS

Are self-directed photoshoots here to stay? Needing imagery to launch products, plenty of brands have taken a scraper, more DIY approach to shots – using current creative restraint to their advantage. London-based Monc enlisted the creativity of its community by sending their new range of sunglasses to creatives – with the general brief of self-shooting themselves being creative under lockdown. Direction was minimal and founder Freddie Elborne says he’s keen to ‘continue community-driven campaigns in the future.’

Brooklyn-based swimwear brand Andie turned to volunteering employees with outdoor space. Art director Alda Leung let people choose three to four colours, deciding which suits worked for each individual’s style and skin tone, then she sent an art direction deck outlining what she wanted. The images, taken on phones and digital cameras, are retouched and used on Andie’s online channels. Meanwhile, New Orleans-based eyewear company Krewe began a series called #KREWAtoughhome, sending glasses to creatives in quarantine to share a glimpse of their lives wearing Krewe specs.

DESIGNING THE NEW OFFICE

When we return to the office, what will it look like? Lots of founders are installing freestanding hand sanitisers and laying down floor markings to establish social distance and traffic flow. And there’s already been a spike in demand for acrylic desk dividers and sneeze guards, with reports of three-month waiting times in the US. Rose Chatinov, founder of Motive Productions in London, has created workspaces for the likes of Desmond & Dempsey and Papier – always, she says, with ‘community and congregation in mind.’ But now she, like many others, has a new set of challenges to overcome – to make the office of the future practical and safe yet also as aesthetically pleasing as past projects.

SUSTAINABLE FASHION’S FUTURE

Prior to the pandemic, sustainable fashion was talked about more than ever before. Fashion is the second most polluting sector after oil. But will the crisis undo all the momentum? There are some green shoots. Farfetch has unveiled its carbon-reducing delivery initiative, offsetting its global emissions for shipping and returns. And the early signs for small sustainable brands like &Daughter are good, too. Co-founder Buffy Reid wasn’t sure if it was ‘appropriate’ to launch her new dress collection during the crisis. But as an independent brand – and with a small distribution network and social distancing measures in place – she decided the only option was to go ahead. ‘It feels weird to say, but we’ve had a strong six weeks of trading,’ says Reid. ‘They sold better than we had hoped pre-Covid.’ She’s had a reduced number of first-time customers – and they’re placing ‘slightly bigger orders than normal’. ‘I think [it’s] customers trying to support independents, and caring about what you’re buying, and where from.’

BREAD

SOUREDough STARTUP

Given the sudden spike in home-bread-making, the logical conclusion is the rise of ‘bread-tech’. Christine Sunu, who works in community engagement at Twillo, has launched a DIY project she’s jokingly called Sourd.io – a ‘fitness tracker for your sourdough starter’. It’s hardware that monitors your bread’s height, humidity and rise and sends the data to a dashboard so you can track ‘how it’s growing and when it needs to be fed.’

HEY AUSTIN

As work-from-wherever-you-are becomes the status quo, expect a migration of knowledge workers from dense cities with eye-watering rent to more financially-attractive urban areas. Austin, Texas, has already seen an influx of companies relocating to the area and record VC funding. The tech hub has a high quality of life, and a more affordable cost of living than the likes of New York or San Francisco.
‘If you just sit at home and say, “Wow, the restaurant industry is so fucked,” well then yeah, it will be. Because it won’t get unfucked by sitting on your ass at home. You have to unfuck things yourself!‘

In your inbox.
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Leadership in tough times

Leadership in times of crisis – sure, but how? Because what worked in good times probably won’t work right now. Long-term strategy has been cast aside as the pandemic has disrupted every sector from fashion and travel to food and drink. Over the next 15 pages, we map out five principles to keep in mind through this period of uncertainty. From leaders who are ruthlessly objective and take absolute responsibility, to leaders who constantly motivate themselves, take effective action and carry their people with them, we hope these stories and insights help you come out stronger on the other side.

01. They are ruthlessly objective

POLAR EXPLORER

Ben Saunders

‘I HAD TO PUT MY EGO ASIDE AND LOOK AT THE FACTS.’

What the polar explorer and endurance athlete Ben Saunders learned about himself when, during a major expedition in Antarctica, he had to ask for help.

‘On New Year’s Day 2014, I found myself in a precarious position. I was fairly warm in my tent, but there was a high wind blowing outside; the temperature was around -35°C. My expedition partner Tarka L’Herpiniere and I had been journeying across the Antarctic Plateau for three months. We were weak after covering more than 1,600km on foot in 55 days. We’d spent the preceding week eating half rations to eke out our meagre supplies. The next food depot was 58km away – perhaps two days’ travel – but we had only half a day’s food left.

‘One option was to call in a rescue, but that would have meant failure and

‘People might assume I’m a natural leader but I’ve frequently sought external advice when facing a difficult choice. In those moments I’ve matured as a leader.’
BRIEFINGS

Below: Polar explorer
Ben Saunders on his record-breaking Antarctic trek in 2013-14.

we’d been planning this expedition for a decade. So I thought about moving forward, but we couldn’t cover that distance in those conditions. Certainly not in our states. We’d have died.

I knew I had to find the solution, as much as I was tempted to ask Tarka. And I realised that the best solution was to have the aircraft standing by to rescue us drop-off supplies instead. At more than $100,000 it’s surely the most expensive takeaway that ever was, but it allowed us to continue. We crossed the finish line in February, thereby completing the first journey in history.

People might argue I am a natural leader but I’ve frequently sought external advice when facing a difficult choice. In those moments in our tent, high on the Antarctic Plateau, where the closest people to us were on the International Space Station, I manned as a leader. Until then, I was motivated by my own ambitions and this nebulous idea of perfectionism. But life doesn’t work like that. Being in charge can be a profoundly solitary position, but at the end of the day, that’s part of the role.

Sometimes the most important, and the most challenging, part of being a leader is working out the best compromise in the face of factors beyond your control.

**NEUROSCIENTIST**

**THE SCIENTIFIC ART OF DECISION-MAKING**

Moran Cerf

Making the right call, especially under stress, requires understanding the workings of the brain and removing bias. Moran Cerf, neuroscientist and business professor at Kellogg School of Management, discusses how to improve the decision-making process.

**DIY neuroscience**

For every brain, there exists the ideal conditions for making decisions. The parameters are external, eg. what time of day it is, whether you’re tired, whether you’re alone. The question is, how do you find out the optimum conditions for your brain and then negotiate that with others in your team? Neuroscience allows you to learn it by looking at the profile of your brain; obviously, a privilege not everyone has access to. But there is a crueller way of making inferences: data in the diary. We can easily keep track of our decisions and analyse them.

1. Start a diary for the next week. Write down every decision you have to make, big or small, as you make them. Write down what the other options were and all the conditions you made your decision under; what you infer from the situation.
2. A week after making each choice, look at the entire list and rank them in terms of how good a decision you feel they’ve proven to be. Now you have a list of choices, conditions and outcomes.
3. Do basic analytics of that: ‘in those choices I was most happy with, I was X, Y and Z’. This is inference in a way, but you still have some sense of situations. You’ll cover a lot of decisions and a lot of circumstances – from one week you’ll have enough data to get a sense of who you are.

**Managing doubt**

‘Relying on data reduces doubt but doubt is not necessarily bad. What research tells us is that we need to separate it from risk. A lot of decisions involve risk, you just want to take risky decisions with high certainty. We’re biased to the effects of recency; we see what has happened recently and think it always happens – sunny days versus rainforests.

**Removing bias**

‘Many of us have intuitions about who we are and why we do what we do – these may or may not be right. In the same vein, a lot of companies think what worked before will work continuously; we have models of reality drawn from experience but we never test them again. This is an experiment – try things for a few hours or days and see what works. Even in a big company, small-scale experimenting is the way to go. A sole thinker is naturally more prone to biases, but we are never on our own: we have friends, family, even customers. Ask, question and experiment with them.’

**EXPERT**

**A STOIC’S GUIDE TO CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS**

Massimo Pigliucci

The philosophy of stoicism holds several tricks to apply to your mindset when objectivity is required, says Massimo Pigliucci, author of How To Be A Stoic.

**01. DON’T FOCUS ON OUTCOMES**

‘The first thing to keep in mind is the dichotomy of control – the notion that certain things are up to you and other things are not. It turns out (and I would recommend writing out a list), what’s up to you is fairly limited. There are all sorts of things you can influence, but that’s not the same as controlling them. Internalise your goals: move from a focus on outcomes to an emphasis on your intentions. Your intentions and the outcomes tend to be correlated – if you make an effort in the right direction, you’re more likely to succeed. But part of that approach is to accept from the get-go that you might not, so any failure doesn’t crush you psychologically.’

**02. REDIRECT EMOTIONS**

‘Suppressing emotions doesn’t work physiologically. Instead, engage in constructive thinking with yourself – essentially, redirect your emotions. Modern psychologists call it the framing effect – when value judgments are not inherent in things or events themselves, but are human constructions. Keeping a distinct and objective description of what’s happening and your value judgment of it is important. You cannot change a pandemic but you can change the way you think about things. Catastrophising engages negative emotions: fear, panic, anxiety. Look at the same thing and say, “That’s an interesting challenge, lets see how I do.”

Literally score yourself and keep notes – then look at your notes and see how you did. This engages your positive emotions: imagination, constructive thinking and ability to solve problems. It calms down because it gives you agency.’

**03. ACCEPT SACRIFICE**

‘Epictetus, a second-century Greek philosopher, said life is theatre, we all play certain roles and sometimes the roles we play may require self-sacrifice. His philosophy involves imagining yourself as a foot that has to step into the mud in order for the entire body to cross the street. If you just think of yourself as a foot, this is unpleasant. But if you remind yourself that what you’re doing is for a greater benefit and helping the whole organism, then it makes more sense. It might mean immediate and unpleasant sacrifice, but it’s the right thing to do in the long term, for yourself and everybody else connected to that organism – in this case your colleagues or employees.’

034 | BRIEFINGS  | 35
02. They take absolute responsibility

PROFILE

Nich Kokonas

‘YOU HAVE TO UNFUCK THINGS YOURSELF’

As an outsider to the restaurant industry, Nick Kokonas’s approach to running restaurants is markedly innovative, and he’s never been afraid to do things his own way. Nor is he about to stop.

Nick Kokonas and his business partner, the chef Grant Achatz, were looking forward to celebrating the 15th anniversary of Alinea on 4th May. Over the years, the Chicago-based restaurant has received 12 James Beard Awards and is one of 13 restaurants in the US to earn the coveted Michelin three-star rating.

There was good reason to celebrate, until almost overnight, there wasn’t. Like the rest of the restaurant industry worldwide, Kokonas found himself fighting for his restaurant to stay alive. The other restaurants and bars in the Alinea Group – Next, Roister, and The Aviary – as well as Tock, the restaurant reservations software company he set up in 2014, also faced a bleak future.

The industry has never seen a crisis on this scale before. But Kokonas, already on his sixth Zoom call of the day by the time Courant catches up with him, says in typically unfiltered fashion: ‘If you just sit home and say, “Wow, the restaurant industry is so fucking,” well then yeah, it will be. Because it won’t get unfucked by sitting on your ass at home. You have to unfuck things yourself.’

A former derivatives trader accustomed to looking at big pools of data and recognising patterns, Kokonas was one of the first major restaurateurs in the US to recognise how destructive Covid-19’s impact would be on the industry – which makes up an estimated 4% of the US GDP and employs almost 12 million people. Looking at the data from Tock, Kokonas saw how the restaurants signed up to the platform in Hong Kong went from being 95% full daily to 0%, and realised restaurants back home were about to suffer a similar fate. ‘I knew I needed a plan.’

A few days later, Kokonas gathered all the managers from his restaurants to inform them of the big changes he was about to implement. Safety measures included mandatory temperature checks each morning and recorded hourly hand-washing sessions for every member of staff. While he was telling them ‘there’s a very high possibility our restaurants don’t exist in six weeks, the president was tweeting, “Nothing is shut down, life and the economy go on,” says Kokonas. ‘So there were a few smirks; a few people thought I’d lost my marbles.’

Time, of course, has proven that Kokonas wasn’t losing his marbles but, rather, taking ownership of the problem. By the time the governor of Illinois confirmed that Tock To Go would remain a permanent part of the business. The dishes are less cerebral than Alinea’s usual three-star fare, but you can get a portion of duck cassoulet, a goat’s cheese side salad and banana cream tart for $42.50 (rather than $300 you’d usually spend to eat in-house).

Alinea’s outside the-box thinking has regularly ruffled feathers. It was his pursuit of greater efficiency that led him to founding Tock. The platform, which Kokonas describes as ‘Shopify for restaurants and their suppliers’, was set up to provide guidance on company strategy but also on how processes are modifying. One of the biggest responsibilities is culture moulding and direction setting throughout – that creates an environment with less need for instruction.

People know what to do and values become embedded.

‘Lastly, be present and fully face the situation right now. The wrong step would be to think that things will return to how they were.’

– Carmen Bonilla-Hortá, professor of professional practice at Rutgers Business School.
I'm trying to set an example that what you think can't be done, can be done.'

more interested in trying to cut through all the noise to find solutions. We've been through some stuff before,' he says, having endured the 2008 financial crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis with Alkhanshali. 'We'll get through this.'

Closures will happen but what about those that do come out the other side? Kokonas says, 'I guarantee there's a company with $40m in the bank got it to feed people and make them happy? Absolutely,' says Kokonas. 'But the government doesn't work right on a good day. Why should we expect this was going to be brilliantly planned when it was coming up with in five days?'

Ultimately, it's up to the individuals to take it and do with it as you can.

The mishandling of the situation led acclaimed chefs such as David Chang to state that the hospitality industry may never recover. Kokonas, however, is

**HISTORIAN WHEN LINCOLN HELD FIRM**

Nancy Kohrn

In the chaos and uncertainty of a crisis, it's critical for leaders to keep moving themselves, their people and their organizations toward the larger mission. This is very hard and depends on the leader being able to access his or her courage muscles when the stakes are high. Consider, then, a pivotal moment in the American Civil War.

By late August 1864, the conflict had been raging for more than three years, and Union and Confederate armies appeared to be locked in a terrible stalemate — with no end to the crisis in sight. In the North, millions of Americans wanted the bloodshed over, and public opinion turned against President Abraham Lincoln’s mission to win the war on terms that would permanently abolish slavery in the United States. Politicians, journalists and others urged the president to instead accept a negotiated peace with the Confederacy — one that would end the hostilities while allowing slavery in the southern states. Lincoln was wracked with worry. He knew he could not relinquish universal emancipation as a condition of ending the war. He could not send black soldiers who had bravely fought for the Union back to their masters. ‘I should be damned in time and in eternity for so doing,’ he explained to two government officials. ‘The world shall know that I will keep my faith to friends and enemies, come what will.

But as the military deadlock continued, the pressure on the president to seek settlement terms increased, and the commander-in-chief began to waver. Perhaps, he told himself as he paced the White House hallway late at night, he should accept the offer from some guy who didn’t run it right to begin with, and she’s going to go in there and get it all half-right. But you know what? That is going to be a great fucking restaurant. That’s what happens out of times like this.

Taking ownership requires confidence — a trait people often wish they had. But it also depends on the ability to constantly motivate themselves. Often you have to accept negative emotions exist, stop blaming others and focus on taking action.
BRIEFINGS

‘They thought I was a smuggler – nobody believed that this kid would leave America to go and sell coffee in Yemen during a war.’

I told them that if they produced higher quality coffee, I would sell it for them. When you give people hope, especially in countries like Yemen, it is a very heavy burden to bear.’

Port of Mokha’s coffee sells for as much as $16 a cup – arguably worth it when you consider it earned the highest score ever awarded in the 25-year history of the prestigious grading programme by Coffee Review. James Freeman, the founder of Blue Bottle Coffee, has even described it as ‘tasting like angels singing’.

And he has also gone wrong for Alkhanshali, despite his many successes. Dave Eggers found his never-say-die attitude so compelling he wrote a book about him called The Almk of Mokha, which went on to become a New York Times bestseller. Eggers describes Alkhanshali’s voyage to Yemen, learning about the coffee of his homeland, as well as the story of his escape from Yemen after the outbreak of war in 2015.

On living amid conflict, Alkhanshali says: ‘Even after seeing the bombs dropping, it was very difficult to wake up into the reality of a war. To feel the earth shaking, smells of death and smoke, hearing the screams of women and children, and not to know if you will even live to see the morning.’ Still, Alkhanshali was determined to leave Yemen to attend the Specialty Coffee Association of America’s annual conference in Seattle to showcase his coffee. Despite the country’s airports having been bombed, he undertook a perilous journey to get back to the US in time for the tasting – which would lead to him being shot, kidnaped, nearly blown up by suicide bombers, drowned, and arrested when he finally reached Djibouti. ‘I thought they had a gun,’ he says. ‘Nobody believed that this kid would leave America to go and sell coffee in Yemen during a war.’

When you go through difficult times you don’t know how tough it was until you look at it retrospectively, he says. ‘When you are in a difficult situation there are just two options: first, you just give up. Second, you are endlessly optimistic, you keep finding new solutions even if there is no logical way to succeed. And I think that takes having a tough mind.’

Always look to learn from your setbacks rather than dwelling on them. Then very quickly seek small wins and make sure you place everything in the context of your long-term goals.

Mokhtar Alkhanshali keeps on going.

Daniel Poggi

EXPERT INSIGHT

STRENGTHENING YOUR RESILIENCE

Dr Lucy Hone

Some key psychological hacks for keeping a positive, motivated mindset during adversity.

‘I’m always surprised by how little psychological insight leaders have when navigating what’s going on in their heads. The textbook line from disaster management is that it’s a marathon, not a sprint. You need to understand you have to pace yourself, any type of longer-term adversity is physically exhausting and emotionally draining. The way to motivate yourself is to have a good recovery routine – otherwise you’ll just burn out. Any athlete will tell you that, it’s exactly the same for leaders. Mental fitness requires the same as physical fitness: training and recovery, to ensure you’re paying back into your psychological piggy bank.’

Build a bank of distractions

‘The foundation of resilience is mental agility being able to pivot and flex. You have to have flexible ways to let off steam. If you can’t do your workout because you’ve hurt your ankle, what do you do then? Mental fitness is just the same – there are going to be new barriers, and you have to work out ways around them. It’s different for different people; at the moment I’m reading my Kindles in the middle of the night when I’m catastrophising, intentionally choosing books to read that make me feel like my problems are small’

Keep in touch with the why

‘The other important thing is tapping into your why. Just knowing why you’re doing this – even the minutiae tasks, the things you don’t like, and working out how they fit into the bigger picture of what your mission is.’

Mokhtar Alkhanshali

FOUNDER

RISKING EVERYTHING FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Nour Mouakke

Even with the odds stacked against you, the ability to reboot everyday and motivate yourself to keep going can, it turns out, get you pretty far. Take Nour Mouakke, who went from immigrant to refugee to founder.

My story might make you wake up in the morning and think today is not such a bad day after all; Nour Mouakke, founder of the cloud-based platform for meetings and events management, Wizme, is fond of saying. Born and raised in Aleppo, Syria, in 1993, Mouakke moved to the UK when he was 26 to study at university. He went on to get a job in marketing at InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), which sponsored him as a highly skilled immigrant, meaning he could stay in the UK beyond his two-year work permit – probably a good thing, as civil war had just broken out back home in Syria. Leaving your homeland to set up in another country is a big risk, but Mouakke was about to take another, even bigger step into the unknown. Spotting that many hotels had old-fashioned and slow booking systems in place, Mouakke came up with his idea of a marketplace for corporations to automate booking small meetings. He called it Wizme.

But to find the company he had to quit his job – and along with it, ties to the company that had initially sponsored him. So Mouakke gave up his visa and applied for refugee status – by definition, giving up the right to travel back home and see his family, another huge personal sacrifice. At this time Aleppo was one of the worst hit cities. Wizme’s success, then, was also tied his family’s wellbeing, Mouakke says.

The next few years didn’t go well. Mouakke bootstrapped the company, lost all of his money and found himself without a home and having to sleep on friends’ sofas. The company looked dead until, in 2017, he was invited to present in front of over 100 business owners at an annual agency consortium event in France, where he earned £150,000 in investment – enough, finally, to grow the company and make it successful. ‘Words like positivity, hope, resilience and determination are how I approach life,’ says Mouakke. ‘With the right attitude, you can achieve anything.’

Mokhtar Alkhanshali

BRIEFINGS
04. They’re able to take effective action

PROFILE
Tessa Brown

‘AFTER THE FIRES.’ Australia’s raging bushfires left winemaker and grape grower Tessa Brown with a completely destroyed vineyard. Here’s what she did next.

Growing up on a cane farm and losing harvests to cyclones had me mentally accustomed to loss,’ says winemaker and grape grower Tessa Brown of Vignerons Schmolzer & Brown. ‘So I’m just putting one foot in front of the other and getting on with things. I’m having a bit of fun, trying things differently and looking at the opportunities that arise from all this.’

In Australia, the summer of 2019 through 2020 is colloquially known as ‘the black summer’. More than 19 million hectares of land were burnt, with devastating impact on human and animal lives, and destruction of flora, trees, plant life and farming crops. The fires largely occurred in December and January: peak time for Australia’s grape harvest for wine production. Producers in New South Wales, and in the northern wine-growing areas of Victoria, have almost uniformly been impacted by the blanketing of bushfire smoke that results in ‘smoke taint’, a defect that causes an acrid, undesirably smoky and, for many, undrinkable flavour profile that can emerge during fermentation or remains latent in wine. It renders wines smoky and, for many, undrinkable.

The smoke taint at Vigneron Schmolzer & Brown was ‘incredibly high,’ says Brown. ‘The disappointment was immediate, but then a survival mode kicked in. We’ve taken positive steps to move forward and work with our community to figure things out.’

Brown and her partner, Jeremy Schmolzer, bought their property, Thorley, in December 2012. The amphitheatre-shaped farm is fringed by native bush in a verdant pocket of Beechworth, Victoria, a prestige wine-growing region around four hours’ north of Melbourne. The duo almost immediately undertook the painstaking task of planting vines on their site, with first grapes harvested in 2015. ‘[2020] was to be our first significant harvest from our property,’ says Brown. ‘I’ve built up a respectable volume of fruit, and this season was shaping up to be near perfect for quality, too.’

After the fire, says Brown, I went into a bit of a cave: ‘But she realised she needed to act fast and become more agile. ‘So we began talking at length to others in the same situation, assessing damage, then spoke to friends in other regions where smoke hadn’t hung around. It was a time to quickly work out the alternative measures.’

Brown says she worked hard on bookkeeping and looking at cash flow, before starting to seek alternative sources for fruit. ‘There was no reason to abandon ambition,’ she says. ‘In her community, she broadcast some of her successes and became a sounding post for many not only locally, but nationally, through conversations online.

Grapes were offered from other regions, and winemakers provided advice on how to handle fruit from their vineyards. ‘Initially, there was trepidation in touching fruit from regions unknown to the winemaking process,’ Brown explains. ‘A readjustment in mindset, and a personal questioning of what would I have done differently with the resources. In discussion with other winemakers, I tried to reframe the difficulties we were facing as something to enjoy intellectually and an opportunity to try different things.’

Brown oscillates between the heartbreak of loss and the optimism found through her outreach of advice to others. ‘Take each day at a time,’ she says. ‘If you want to fall in a heap that’s fine. But get up the next day and go forward with your thinking. Look to other avenues but narrow things down. Communicate as widely as possible – solutions sometimes appear. Have a go.’

Most importantly, Brown offers a takeaway missive, and focuses on her messaging that future planning and hindsight work in hand-in-hand. ‘I have always been told that preserving goodwill in the community, local and further afield, is a good measure,’ she says. ‘You can lean on it when you need it, and keep some in reserve for others when they might be having a shit time.’

After acting quickly and making big decisions, often there’s a lot of work to be done. Moving forwards, watch things and tweak accordingly.
Q&A

“THEORY IS ONE THING, REALITY IS ANOTHER”

Zeus + Dione

Fashion brand Zeus + Dione launched in 2011 with the motto ‘Made in Greece’ – and then the recession hit, hard, with lots of factories in the country closing down. Co-founder Dimitra Koltotoura talks about how it made her think outside of the box, act fast and try to see alternative worst-case scenarios.

Q: Greece’s financial crisis happened just after Zeus + Dione launched. What was that like?
A: We were very prepared with our business plan – but, of course, theory is one thing, reality is another. It was tough. We had to travel all over the country to find out who was still manufacturing, so we could make a product that showcased that. Meanwhile, all over the media, we were reading about how our country was suffering. So we had to adapt and increase our spend on marketing and PR to ensure we were heard.

Q: Today, 90% of your products are sold outside of Greece. Why was export so important?
A: With all the restrictions in place, Greek consumers were very much under strain; that’s why we wanted to make our presence abroad known. We also realised that our story was very appealing to retailers, and selling it gave us the opportunity to sell from LA to New York to Hong Kong. At the same time, the news was showing Athens burning. The buyers would look at the garment and ask: ‘Is this really happening in Greece?’

Q: Of course, Greece’s economy got worse before it got better. How did you cope with that?
A: We made small batches and formed partnerships with the people making the raw materials, the fabrics, our embroideries. We had to build a lot of trust so they’d believe in our vision [of creating a global brand]. Once they could see it was working – especially in terms of selling abroad – they were ready to take measures – well, they’d be out of the game sooner.

What did you learn about yourself during this difficult time?
A: You have to be flexible. Both Mareva [Grabowski, the brand’s co-founder] and myself are business people. We used to have successful companies before and part of that business sense is knowing how to adapt and navigate according to the economy, and to always be ready to accommodate its needs. We still constantly re-evaluate our business plan. If a collection isn’t working as expected we’ll take decisions to relaunch the outcome. At one point, retailers said they wanted to see items at a lower price point. So we did a line with cotton and linen, but still hand embroidered and given the same treatment as our silk garments. We didn’t lose our vision – but found a result that was equally beautiful and approachable. You have to listen and adapt, without losing time. This is a situation that no one could have expected. I hate to say it, but whoever isn’t prepared or ready to take measures – well, they’ll be out of the game sooner.

EXPERT INSIGHT

STAYING GROUNDED

George Kohlrieser

“In crisis situations, leaders need to pivot or turn quickly as the situation demands. To be creative, to take risks, to be able to explore, you have to have a sense of psychological safety. That’s what’s known as being a secure base leader: someone able to build a trusting environment during a time of difficulty and able to handle the emotions of themselves and of others. It’s crucial to build your own secure base – to remain calm, grounded and looking for creative things you can do. In times of uncertainty, the risk is that the brain shuts down and becomes defensive. ‘There’s no question there is threat – the leader has to prevent themselves becoming hostage to the psychological concept of feeling powerless. Then, it’s essential to communicate the changes so everyone understands why and where adjustments are being made so execution of changes can be clearly done and aligned. Finally, the leader has to be alert and seek feedback to be able to change again. Most organisations must move with more speed than ever before. The two characteristics leaders need most right now are flexibility and a curiosity to learn.’

– George Kohlrieser is a professor of leadership and organisational behaviour at IMD Business School and author of Hostage at the Table.

05. They take their people with them

EXPERT

‘COMMUNICATING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE CRISIS’

Amy Gallo, author of The HBR Guide to Dealing with Conflict, details how tapping into your emotional intelligence can help guide your team through times of trouble and uncertainty.

Right now leaders need to make decisions – often about trade-offs and issues they’ve never faced before – and they need to make them fast. So, how can you be both a decisive and inclusive leader during this crisis? And how can you lead people who are scared, anxious, and overwhelmed – especially when you may be feeling the same? While naturally there’s no playbook for the current situation, at a leadership level it can be approached like any other crisis, and relying on your emotional intelligence skills, empathy, and self-compassion in particular can help you communicate with your team.

‘Ask yourself what would I want to hear from a leader right now?’ What messages and tone would be reassuring? If you have tough news to convey – whether it’s that you’re pressing pause on a project or you won’t be able to give bonuses – think about it from the perspective of those receiving it. ‘Your people are likely worried about their futures and will want reassurance. Give it to them, but don’t be tempted to sugarcoat difficult news. If you paint a rosy picture that turns out to be a lie, you’ll lose the team’s trust and risk appearing disconnected from reality. At the same time, don’t be too negative either. Be honest about what you’re up against but also emphasise that you believe the team can get through this (assuming, of course, that you do). Focus on the capabilities the team has, whether that’s resilience, deep domain knowledge, an uncanny ability to connect with customers, or something else altogether.’

Amy Gallo (centre) speaks to audiences about practical tips for managing conflict in the workplace.
Draw the line at hard news

Delivering bad news isn’t easy – especially when you’re throwing a rose-colored lens over the truth. If you paint a rosy picture that turns out to be a lie, you’ll lose credibility. People notice when you don’t tell the truth.

Research shows that people are willing to accept negative outcomes as long as they believe there was a fair process for making those decisions.

‘Make sure you’re taking care of yourself too. Eat well, get exercise and lots of sleep, and perhaps most importantly, choose self-compassion. Bear yourself up when you can’t deliver everything that your team needs.

‘Your people are likely worried about their futures and will want reassurance. Give it to them, but don’t be tempted to sugarcoat difficult news. If you paint a rosy picture that turns out to be a lie, you’ll lose the team’s trust.’

is not going to help you or your team move forward. Think about how a friend or trusted colleague would counsel you during these tough moments. They’d likely tell you that you’re doing the best you can under extremely challenging circumstances – which is true. It’s worth reminding yourself that being a leader doesn’t mean you don’t deserve compassion too. You do.

Delivering hard news isn’t easy – especially in tough times. But when doing so, try to think about it from the perspective of those receiving it.

BRIEFINGS   | 4746

FOUNDER
BUILDING COMRADEERY
William Adoasi

‘Them being loyal to me is actually them being loyal to themselves.’ William Adoasi grew up in south London. Aged 19, he dropped out of university to establish Starlight Sports Academy. Tapping into UK government funding for after-school sports, he recruited football coaches – mainly off Gumtree – and pitched their services to schools around London. His business turned over £180,000 in three years, which wasn’t bad for someone in their late teens.

But after a few years, the government decided to pull the funding and Adoasi’s business model was broken. It wasn’t until years later he would earn a place on Backstage Capital’s accelerator programme to find his next company, Vitae London, an e-commerce watch company that funds education in Africa.

‘I mostly attribute my leadership skills to growing up in a big family. My mum is one of 25 children, while I have six brothers and sisters myself and have got cousins for days. I’ve always had to look after young family members and be a leader in that sense. And running Starlight, I was constantly pitching to headmasters, getting the kids excited, marshalling and hiring coaches, generally dealing with a lot of personalities.

‘Many people, when leading others, shout about what they want done, what their vision is. But I don’t think that works very well, especially when times are tough. Leadership is about putting other people’s visions in front of them.

‘I’ve always been specific in recruiting people where I believe our ultimate visions align. I invest in staff and give them the opportunities they need to be the best versions of themselves – upskilling them, giving them exposure to the best professionals and best equipment. So them being loyal to me is actually them being loyal to themselves, and we both end up winning.

I try to be as compassionate as possible when making tough decisions. I look into people’s personal lives and see if they have any issues that might affect their work, so that I can be best prepared to serve them as a leader in all facets. I try to see things through their perspective. Sometimes, to the detriment of the business, you end up putting your employees first, but knowing that in the long term it will benefit the company.’

EXPERT
EMPATHY IN FOOTBALL
Simon Kuper

In the cut-throat world of football, empathy typically doesn’t get managers very far. But, says the sports writer and Financial Times columnist Simon Kuper, the inclusive leadership of football manager Guus Hiddink – in which he ensures everyone feels nurtured and needed – is at the root of his success.

Guus Hiddink grabs your shoulders by way of greeting. But then, growing up with five brothers and sisters, he gave himself a gift for the chummy ‘right matey’ gesture. The former manager of Chelsea, Russia, South Korea, Real Madrid and many other football teams is a solid, jovial, soothing presence.

Hiddink managed through empathy: he let the people around him flatter their own egos.

Starting out at PSV Eindhoven in the 1980s, the young coach with a Groucho Marx moustache had less status than some of his players. But he didn’t mind. He smoked cigarettes with his stars, swapping jokes and listening to their ideas as if they were brothers. In 1988 the provincial Dutch club won the European Cup.

‘Manager Guus Hiddink understood just when footballers needed motivation and when (more often) they needed to be relaxed.’

That summer he persuaded the Brazilian star Romario to join PSV. Hiddink knew that Romario was difficult. The best players often are, because they can afford to be. If Romario prioritised sleeping (his hobby) over attending compulsory team lunches, Hiddink let him. The flipside was that Romario had to make mistakes. Hiddink understood just when footballers needed motivation, and when (more often) they needed to be relaxed. Russian footballers played with fear of failure because their coaches berated them for mistakes. When Hiddink became coach of Russia, he encouraged his players to make mistakes. All he asked was that they have fun.

After Russia reached the semi-finals of Euro 2008 playing joyous, ebullient football, the star, Andrei Arshavin, muttered something about ‘a wise Dutch coach’, and cried. And almost all Hiddink’s former players speak about him with respect – some even with love.

ILLUSTRATION: CHELSEA F.C.
As coronavirus fears swelled in Copenhagen a few months ago, chef Frederik Bille Brahe noticed that fewer and fewer guests were visiting his Copenhagen café, Atelier September. ‘Slowly, the city began to die out. We had less customers and staff members with families were scared to come into work,’ he says. So, when the Danish government announced that food establishments would have to close on 14th March except for takeaway, Brahe sent home his employees and shut down his café. ‘We eventually found a way to stay open without actually being open,’ Brahe says. In early April he turned the café into a grocery store for one day a week. Every Friday, customers could collect a bag filled with vegetables, juices and natural wines from local suppliers, as well as Atelier’s signature granola. ‘It’s the least we could do to help our producers,’ Brahe adds.

Denmark was one of the first countries to ban public gatherings and close schools, restaurants and bars in a lockdown that quickly helped slow the spread of the coronavirus. In turn, this led to it being one of the first European countries to open again. And now, as lockdown measures ease, Atelier September has pivoted again. Food establishments were given the greenlight to open to customers for dining on 18th May with reduced numbers, but Brahe isn’t in a rush to host guests indoors. Instead, the café will reopen as a deli and farm shop, where customers can pick up seasonal salads, baked goods, and local eggs to go. ‘It’s a new world now,’

Left and below: Lilla Bakery in Copenhagen has stayed open during the crisis.
Brahe says: ‘Customers may not want to sit in an intimate setting and will prefer to be outdoors where the risk of spreading the virus is lower.’

On social media he has also talked about how lockdown has given him the ‘time to think with a clarity I don’t have when I’m operating.’ On reopening one of his other food and drink ventures – Apollo Bar, which is tucked into the courtyard at the Royal Danish Academy of Art – he posted: ‘Lockdown has given me courage to say goodbye to some things and work out what is really amazing and why. The restaurant world has changed now.’ He has stopped serving meat and is setting up an outside bar.

Other cafés in Copenhagen are similarly reluctant to host guests indoors. The owners of Lille Bakery, Zara Boreas and Mia Boland, say that they’re not expecting to open their café for seating inside this summer: ‘It’s too risky to have people indoors, but we hope to seat customers outside on our deck.’ Lille Bakery stayed open during the crisis through ‘sheer will and enthusiasm,’ say the owners. As lockdown came into effect they looked at their options and opened an online grocery store while starting up a bike delivery service run by friends and neighbours. They also adjusted the indoor café space to allow customers to queue for takeaway. ‘The most challenging part of this was trying to serve people as fast as possible,’ says Zara. ‘As customers had to keep a two metre distance in line, the queue was sometimes so long that it overwhelmed us.’ Zara and Mia plan to keep the grocery store running while eventually phasing out their delivery model. Lille was founded in 2018 on the premise of bringing people together under one roof, and customers have remarked over the years on how they love hanging out at the...
BRIEFINGS

BRIEFINGS

Above: Atelier September created a grocery store during the lockdown. Below: The café made adjustments to the ‘new normal’ so customers could still make purchases, and now operates as a deli and farm shop.

Global sales of video game products were at $1.6bn in March – the highest since 2008. In the UK, kettles balls saw the biggest increase in sales for exercise equipment (up 419%). In the USA, activewear has been more resilient (down 26% YoY) than fast fashion (down 85% YoY). Sales of multivitamins and supplements are up 40%. Oat milk sales increased by 350% over an 8-week period globally. Inline and rollerskating sales are up 878%. Sales of yeast increased 175% in France – the highest increase of any product. USA home improvement retailers are up 20%; home furnishing retailers are down 30%; Oreo sales in the USA are up 43%, USA educational software sales are up 223%.

The Covid-19 crisis has changed how consumers spend money. As businesses reopen, it’s worth paying attention to some of the notable shifts.

According to McKinsey, overall spending intent is down in two-thirds of the countries surveyed – only in groceries, household supplies, personal care and home entertainment is consumers expecting to maintain or increase their usual spending. Between 40-60% of consumers say they’re planning to now adopt digital and low-touch solutions like grocery delivery and online fitness. Indeed, data from Nielsen reveals that 81% of global consumers are willing to try virtual reality and augmented reality to access products or services. Meanwhile, there has been a shift to buying local: a study by the UK’s Centre for Economics and Business Research showed 80% of consumers intent to shop more locally once lockdown is over, up with 58% willing to pay more on products made in Britain.

Trump can’t just flip on a switch and say: “Back to restaurants like you used to.” E-commerce will be bigger, for sure, but consumers are getting fatigued by a value proposition that’s just: “Hey! Keep us in business – buy something.” It’s a bit tone deaf because we’re all in a hard time.

Whether baking at home or using public transport, all our new behaviour is grounded in risk. We’ve become more cautious. Face masks are the most vivid embodiment of this and will likely become everyday accessories even in ‘peace-time’, much like masks in China or Japan. London-based fashion designer Florence Bridge – whose label is one of the many to capitalise on this new consumer behaviour – thinks this is particularly true if designers can give the face mask style and individuality. “I think they look really cool – especially when you’re wearing a matching dress or shirt,” she says. “I would love to make masks as a part of my collections. Until there’s a vaccine, I think there will be demand for them.”

However, although we can project some trait changes and speculate what business models might come out on top in this new world we are currently living in, the bigger picture is more murky. “Right now it’s too early to tell because most people are operating on a survival mentality. The wild card here is the sense of safety that’s been threatened,” says Rahaf Harfoush, a Paris-based strategist who teaches in Sciences Po’s masters of finance and economics programme in Paris.

“One of the biggest lessons of the pandemic is the need for diversification in terms of revenue streams,” she continues. “Everyone realised that those who only had one revenue stream that was dependent on real-life interactions took a hard hit. I anticipate a mindset where people hedge their bets by having more diversified jobs and projects.”

The ongoing health crisis has forced many business around the world to pivot their strategies in order to survive and answer clients’ needs – take restaurants-turned-grocery stores and hotels retrofitting rooms into remote offices. But are these short-term solutions or do they reflect a sustained shift in the way we will consume and do business?

The food and drink sector is among the hardest hit, with bars and restaurants unlikely to open at full occupancy until the late summer in many countries. Ukraine’s retail giant Globus announced in late May its decision to shutter 300 of its supermarkets following losses during lockdown. But others, like Spain’s El Corte Ingles chain and French hypermarket group Carrefour, are starting to use the crisis to their advantage, with 58% of consumers saying they’re more locally once lockdown is over, up with 58% willing to pay more on products made in Britain.

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‘During Chinese New Year [in January] I started hearing what was happening in Wuhan,’ says Camden Hauge, the American restaurateur known for her growing food and drink empire in Shanghai. By early February Hauge’s four locations – Egg, Bitter, Bird and KIN – were closed for dine-in service, and by 1st March they reopened. Just one catch: they were split between Jing’an and Xuhui, with each having its own reopening guidelines. ‘For the next 15 days we had a series of restrictions in Xuhui, just at Bitter and Bird, bizarrely,’ she says. ‘Each street has its own little hierarchy of control.’ Hauge’s team were also required to take their guests’ temperatures and phone numbers, and submit staff temperatures via QR code. And then, mid-pandemic, came a fifth spot: Lucky Mart. ‘In January I had a conversation with a bartender friend about [opening] a highball bar,’ she says. ‘And so from us talking seriously about the concept to opening was a six-week process.’

To read our full interview with Camden Hauge, head to couriermedia.co.
It’s all super delivery-friendly. You Japanese convenience store food. sell konbini, which is basically can also go in takeaway cups, plus we and also sell merchandise beyond your food and drink offerings.

01. BRAND HYPE

‘Be brand-centric so that you always learn during the crisis.

02. GET MERCH

‘Make sure you’re delivery-friendly and also sell merchandise beyond F&B. You need to sell things far outside just your brick and mortar space. So for Lucky Mart, we built up the brand and created things like t-shirts and hats. Our highball drinks can also go in takeaway cups, plus we sell kombini, which is basically Japanese convenience store food. It’s all super delivery-friendly. You don’t need to be on site, in the shop, for us to sell you things.’

03. KEEP IT SMALL

‘Be very space-efficient. Lucky Mart was such a small investment in terms of the space itself – it’s 35 square meters, so really tiny. Our capex is low and we have few staff!’

04. GOOD PEOPLE

‘Since Lucky opened I’m stretched too thin. My managers are phenomenal – I couldn’t do it without them. I thought about this a lot during Covid-19. As your people get more talented, how do you continue to make that affordable in small, independent places? I want to keep talent, but then they reach a certain point where you can’t really challenge them or pay them more. And so over the past couple of months I thought about creating a hospitality group as an umbrella for us to sell you things.’

Following the 2003 SARS outbreak in Hong Kong, tourist numbers fell off a cliff – but then bounced back in a huge way. Courier’s Michael Downes explains whether this offers a silver lining for Hong Kong today – or is wishful thinking.

While Hong Kong tourism did recover quite quickly and grew alongside most other developed economies until the global financial crisis hit, it was driven mostly by mainland tourists.

I’ve been living in Hong Kong since 2010 and in those days it was a struggle to find a decent coffee, restaurant and bakery, so I don’t think the creative scene necessarily took off immediately post-SARS. Starbucks ruled supreme.

While the creative scene has since blossomed, it has more to do with the global entrepreneurial tailwinds post-financial crisis. Also, the US dollar weakened significantly (the Hong Kong dollar is pegged to the US dollar), so all of a sudden Hong Kong was a relatively cheap place to set up shop with little bureaucratic red tape and low tax. The economy was charging along with the support of mainland money pouring in.

From a rent perspective, property certainly fell significantly in 2003, which helped some creatives to establish a foothold, but it has been rising very steadily since. It’s been the most expensive property market in the world for many years now, further exacerbated by the strengthening US dollar.

More recently, many bars and restaurants have gone under, following the protests and Covid. Landlords are very stubborn when it comes to rent reductions here – many would rather leave a place empty than lose face and reduce rent (culturally, it’s not the thing to do). A few years ago, Elgin Street and Wyndham Street were buzzing seven nights a week – and now they’re empty with, I reckon, up to 50% of places boarded up or on their last legs.

While Hong Kong tourism did recover quite quickly, it was driven mostly by mainland tourists.

In the Exarchia neighbourhood of Athens is Kopria, a beautiful plant shop founded in September 2018 by friends Vasilis Nzeremes and Ifigeneia Filopoulou. Ifigeneia explains how they have dealt with the shutdown. When Vasili and I opened Kopria there were no other plant shops in Athens, only big nurseries. We tried to create a very careful selection of plants that you couldn’t find elsewhere – there was a huge gap in the market for something like that. It was our passion.

When the virus came to Greece, we closed the shop days before the government required us to as we felt it wouldn’t be safe for our customers. The store is so small – 45 square meters. The right thing to do was to stay home, be patient and see what happens. We were just about to open our online shop, but it wasn’t quite ready yet. So we weren’t able to sell anything. Luckily, we’d chosen a neighbourhood with low rent, and when we saw what was happening we didn’t put money into buying new stock. During quarantine we have kept our plants in the store and watered them every few days. Thankfully, they kept growing and nothing died.

We have a very loyal community that was waiting for us to reopen. Normally we’re not open on Mondays but the government said shops could open again from Monday 4th May, so we decided to do that. Without posting anything on Instagram, people turned up at the shop – we were so happy.

We’re now trying to build our online store, as during autumn we fear there might be another lockdown so we want to be ready. At the moment we can only have eight people in the store at one time. A lot of our friends used to come in on Saturdays and hang out, but they can’t do that [right now].
We tried to create a very careful selection of plants that you couldn’t find elsewhere – there was a huge gap in the market for something like that. It was our passion.'

Above and right: The owners of Kopria now only allow up to eight people in the store at a time.
in our business strategy – we see the butterflies – both have powerful inspired pieces such as bees and We’ve also seen an increase in nature- purchases such as zodiac pendants. such as initial pendants and ‘feel good’ customers have responded to this. Top to the fore, sharing the magic of nature, the past two months we’ve brought that shops refusing to open in protest. There was even independent retailers, many of whom was a palpable sense of anger among WhatsApp were proliferating and there reduced hours. The government was also very quickly closed and we China were very quickly closed and we launch with the amalgamation of normal operations and beverage storage and preparation. restaurants and hotels will need to open, clean and honest. We envisage layouts and their spaces and brand themselves with a view to being more open, clean and honest. We envisage restaurants and hotels will need to show clientele the cleanliness of not just their supply chain but also food and beverage storage and preparation. With hotels, we’ll begin to see an amalgamation of normal operations with ways of providing services that have worked well in recent months – such as hotels offering gym classes which can also be undertaken remotely in a guest’s room. Of our clients which are still busy during this period, we’ve also found that hotels offering in-room food preparation capabilities have had a higher occupancy in general than those which do not. It’s been incredible to see hotels and restaurants offering free meals and hotel rooms for healthcare workers. It will be interesting to see whether this kind of community engagement will continue.

expert insight

the nuts and bolts of reopening a restaurant

Chris Miller, founder of restaurant investment and advisory company White Rabbit Fund

what you can do to prepare to move back indoors

On revenue streams: ‘I don’t see restaurant revenue returning to [previous] levels until well into next year so it’s about creating additional revenue streams; you’ve got to have a delivery offering now. Things would have to be the most profitable but it’s about keeping staff employed and retaining a relationship with the customer.

On paying rent: ‘You have to be open about what your trading looks like with landlords. They don’t want an empty property, and few people will be opening a restaurant in the next few years. Can you find a sensible plan where you can both make a little money? Or do you both don’t lose as much money? It might become a turnover percentage until you hit a certain threshold and then a base rent kicks in.’

On the supply chain: ‘Pressure will come when there’s significant inflation on the cost of ingredients. A lot of suppliers will go out of business due to the coronavirus, which might mean supply disruption and that does lead to an increase in prices. Restaurants might consider things like cover charges – essentially a couple of pounds for the real estate to get your fresh food done.

On menu prices: ‘I don’t think putting prices up is the right thing to do, but neither are promotions or giveaways. Restaurants have been in fundamental trouble because there’s been zero income. For me at the moment, the aim is not to make money anymore – it’s “can I break even?” And “can I keep as many members of staff on my payroll?” So when things do come back to what they might have been, we have a real good business ready to grow again.’

Do you read me?!”

For Mark Kesselring, co-owner of popular Berlin bookshop and magazine store Do you read me?, the crisis has been an opportunity to beef up their e-commerce offering.

Our store isn’t big, but we have lots of magazines, books and people – normally. We closed on 16th March to avoid putting our staff or customers in danger, and reopened after a month. Now only three people can enter at the same time and everyone has to wear a face mask. Some people don’t believe in this or think they won’t get ill, so you have to talk with customers if they’re not wearing one. People are learning that this is a new kind of normal, so behaviours are becoming more like routines.

We still had pick-up orders when we shut, so somebody ordered a book online or called us, we handed it out at the store. We also communicated more than ever via Instagram, which helped to bring in business. We managed around 10-15% of our normal sales during this time.

Our online sales are doing better because we’ve pushed it quite a lot, but it’s much more work. All the shipping, finding the right price; packaging, things getting lost; people not being at home and dealing with shipping companies. We had lots of trouble and going forward we need to change how we set up our e-commerce.

It’s just not comparable to buying in the store. Even if you’re open for only 3-5 hours a day, we’ll have more turnover than what we have online. I believe magazines and books are best bought when you hold them in your hands, when you feel the paper, weight and print quality. Sitting in a store and talking to people – it’s just more of a direct relationship than sitting in front of a computer.'
Do you have the right stuff? — Courier editorial, p64
1. Congratulations! You're on your own now — Mark Emil Hermansen, p64
2. Launch now if you can — Kim Pham, p65
3. Helping restaurant workers survive — Ravneet Gill, p66
4. On retail and the new normal — Juan Diego, p69
5. Help! — Tijana Tamburic, p70
6. On ‘chill professionals’ — Marty Bell, p71
7. ‘We aim to pay you.’ What? — Fleur Emery, p71

‘The Soul of an Entrepreneur’ by David Sax — Book extract, p67
‘Future-Proof Your Business’ by Tom Cheesewright — Book extract, p73

‘A trend I’ve picked up on recently, which has been amplified by the current crisis and coming from the majority of our private chat group’s most successful members, is a sense of what I’m calling ‘chill professionalism’.” p71
Copenhagen

MARK EMIL HERMANNSEN

Congrats! You’re on your own now

We founded Empirical Spirits in 2017 to use alcohol as a vessel for experimentation and sharing experiences, rather than creating drinks that fit neatly into defined categories. So we always say we’re a flavour company more than a distillery. We don’t look to run it like a typical manufacturing plant, either—in fact, we often look to the tech world for lessons in how we test markets and products.

We also learnt from the tech world how to grow a company while staying agile. And over the past few months staying agile, maybe more than anything else, has been one of our biggest strengths. As one of my mentors said to me shortly after the pandemic hit: Congratulations.

Over the past few months staying agile, maybe more than anything else, has been one of our biggest strengths.

Mark. You’re finally in a position where no one else can offer you any advice. He was right. No one of my generation has experienced a global pandemic before. But you have to be agile while staying true to your brand. Across the world, alcohol delivery is at record levels and new brands are launching in this space. There’s a lot of paid-for advertising on social media being carried out, but it’s not something we’ve ever done before. A good enough product should always drive people to your brand. Why change now?

Elsewhere, distribution has slowed down. Usually our drinks get delivered to the UK within two days; now it’s six or six. But we’ve learnt to only look after the things inside our area of control, and double down on those. For example, for our recent collaboration with Cosmic, the contemporary Mexican restaurant in New York City we decided to batch a large portion of it at their spot—not just so that we didn’t have to ship stuff out there (let alone deal with compliance), but because the collaboration also became about sharing their vision of hospitality. This is something we typically never would have done or allowed, but now you have to be more willing to watch what’s happening and respond quickly in turn, and the collaboration was actually so much more fun, real and valuable to everyone more because of that.

On the other hand, Deliveroo came to us with an offer to deliver free samples of our drinks with food orders. We politely said no because we like to control the experience, and having our drinks with a potentially shitty meal isn’t ideal. We instead partner with brands much more aligned with our values.

The journey we are on with online ordering is here to stay. People want to host more in their homes and plan their consumption around that. High-end restaurants—typically dependent on international clientele—are paying more attention to their local community. My hope is that in the long term these new trends in food and drink prove to be quite exciting.

Mark Emil Hermansen is co-founder of Empirical Spirits.

New York

KIM PHAM

Why we felt we had to launch now

My sister and I both quit our jobs to build Omoson, the company of our dreams. The name originates in the Vietnamese word for ‘rowdy’, and was used by our parents to chastise us whenever we were too loud growing up (which was a lot!). We planned to launch in March, but then the pandemic hit.

Some of our investors said our startup—selling pre-packaged blends of sauces, seasonings and aromatics to cook Asian dishes at home—should wait. Pull back and go again next year, they told us. But with so much stuck at home indefinitely, we realised that Omoson is actually more relevant than ever, so we decided to push forwards even faster.

Launching during a pandemic requires some changes and compromises. All our marketing has taken on a scrappier, more DIY approach. Fun fact: I did all of our recipe content shooting in my Brooklyn flat. The visuals came out a bit grittier, but also more realistic—which feels more reflective of the times (as opposed to perfectly manicured content). And on the supply chain side, my co-founder and sister Vanessa had run into delays. Over 90% of our ingredients are imported from Asia because you cannot find them at scale in the US (in specific sort of Thai chilli pepper, say, or Filipino calamansi puree). Vanessa also somehow managed a production run 100% remotely which involved (a lot of) FaceTime and samples being sent out overnight to ensure they met our standards.

Launching an Asian food brand at this time has been challenging, but we believe it is a pivotal time for the Asian American community. This audience has largely been ignored by mainstream food brands, yet we are the fastest growing segment of the US population with the fastest growing buying power. Now, more than ever, we’re stepping into our voices and influencing American media, culture and diets.

Vanessa and I grew up south of Boston in a predominantly white town. As the daughters of refugees and Vietnamese-Americans, we internalised a lot of shame associated with our food. Only recently has a light been shown on this deep-rooted issue for many first- and second-gen folks, with prominent voices like Chrissy Teigen and David Chang sharing their stories and demanding change. Still, there hasn’t been much progress in mainstream grocery store representation. This ‘ethnic’ aisle still exists, and is considered ‘ethnic’ by mainstream media. Why are some cuisines and communities allowed to transcend this aisle? Why do many POC cuisines remain othered?

All we can do is focus everyday on crafting Omoson with purpose, despite the many challenges on our path forwards. It’s not about everything being perfect—it’s about thoughtfully building for a community that shouldn’t have to wait any longer to be recognised, honoured and celebrated.
Helping restaurant workers survive

In the food and drink industry, we have all heard restaurant owners complaining that they can’t find staff who are ‘willing to graft’, ‘just stay put’ and that this new generation of cooks is ‘somewhere different’. And in many ways, they are right.

Recently, chefs have become aware of their rights and they’ve collectively flipped the lid on a state system. In the UK, the massive growth in food businesses year on year, without the adequate regulation of workers to fill the gap, means the workforce has gained the power of choice and movement between roles.

On top of this, growth in social media presence and media coverage for celebrity chefs has sparked record numbers heading to cookery school for a career change. And for many of them, it’s no longer about putting the time in but, rather, how to turn that into something that can be a stable career choice. Whether it’s chefs from wanting to open a place of their own, or will certain businesses close down, making it easier for new ventures to blossom further down the line?

What’s more, service charges, tips and taxonomic payments – commonly used to top up hospitality salaries – are not included as part of the UK government’s grant schemes. And they can typically make up to 25% of a hospitality worker’s salary.

So what now? Some chefs are pivoting quickly into dark kitchen concepts that can make it easier for new ventures to open up without furlough, as chef Jackson Boxer puts it. He announced a more than fairly priced takeaway and pick up service from Musona, with just her doing the cooking. And if you’ve seen some chefs turn their skills to helping charitable organisations, like Sophie Godwin and the Caiger & Co bunch, who set up a side project to create healthy snacks for NHS workers.

On the flip side, it’s evident that some of those hospitality workers have, understandably, had their mental health compromised by having to sign on and being left in the lurch by their employer. With this in mind, Beyond Brigade has taken a pioneering step to ensure that these mostly freelance chefs are well looked after them through all of this.

Will the crisis deter these mostly freelance chefs from wanting to open a place of their own, or will certain businesses close down, making it easier for new ventures to blossom further down the line?

Keeping it in the family

In his new book, The Soul of an Entrepreneur, David Sax breaks down Silicon Valley startup myths – including the one that says family life prevents successful entrepreneurship. For the Zuccardis in the Andean foothills of Argentina, for example, the entire family is crucial to the success of their firm, vineyards and winery – 93-year-old-grandma included.

In the Silicon Valley startup myth, family is a nonentity. Startups are a one-generation phenomenon, the process of individuals or partners creating businesses, while the family is just something the entrepreneur has at home. Often, family is portrayed as an accessory or an impediment to entrepreneurship. Or the family is there to play the perfect supporting cast to the entrepreneur’s success. Beyond that, the family plays no real role in this myth.

Since Silicon Valley’s model places an exit from a business as its immediate goal, this casts the story of entrepreneurship as one with a beginning, middle and defined end, which occurs in one generation or less. Against this, multigenerational entrepreneurship is a quaint anachronism, while a family business entrepreneur is a paradigmatic term – an idea completely ill-suited to our dynamic modern economy.

What could be more risk-averse, slow moving and even anti-entrepreneurial than a business that is run by a dynastic process of genetic descendants, as if entrepreneurship could be transferred somehow by bloodline?

The reality, however, is that entrepreneurship is firmly rooted in families. According to the Family Firm Institute, a think tank, approximately two-thirds of the businesses around the world are owned and operated by families. In America, family firms constitute over half of the businesses in the country and half of those listed on stock markets. These range from blue-chip multinationals to the proverbial mom-and-pops.

Family entrepreneurship may be common throughout the world, but it is so markedly different from the standard tale of the individual founder creating something new, that we often fail to recognize it beyond the first generation or appreciate why it matters. Which is a shame.

Because when we ignore the experiences of family entrepreneurs, we sweep aside some of the most important questions around entrepreneurship and the two elements of our lives—work and family—that are inseparable.

MULTI-GENERATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

‘It’s difficult to see our kids sometimes as human beings,’ said Wendy Sage-Hayward, a family business advisor and professor in Vancouver, who has worked with a number of clients in the wine business. ‘Even when children become adults, we see them as our kids. But there’s also so much emotion. Ownership owns a business that they found that it is difficult to let go and share it.’ For Michael McGrann, who runs a family business consulting firm in Philadelphia called the Felix Group, many entrepreneurs keep the business separate from their family entirely or compartmentalise it, with limited transparency about the overall state of the business. ‘If I don’t engage my family, I can shut the door to my office and go home.’ McGrann said, explaining how an entrepreneur often believes that by building a wall around their business, they are protecting their family from it. In the long term, however, this dooms the business and the family because everyone is in the dark.

Lauri Union, who runs Babson College’s Institute for Family Entrepreneurship—and who previously turned around her grandfather’s corrugated metal business in North Carolina—said this ultimately led to a loss of entrepreneurial capacity in a family. The younger generation’s ability to dream and create is kind of eclipsed by the older generation’s desire to retain control.

Few family businesses succeed into the second generation and fewer still into the third and beyond. The family, the individual and the business overlap in ways that can be unhealthy, with personal emotions about preferential treatment, sibling rivalry and love playing out within the economic realities of a business. Often, the founder’s children have no interest following in their parents’ footsteps, opting for careers in other professions or starting their own businesses.

For all the difficulties, however, the potential advantages of multi-generational entrepreneurship are numerous too: it can mean lasting economic security and an anchor of a family identity. It can open up choices that might never have materialised otherwise.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The wine business is one where family entrepreneurship not only persists, but remains firmly tied to the industry. Pick up a bottle of wine from anywhere in the world, and you will often find a product produced by a business that has remained within the same family for two, four or a dozen generations. More than its tasting notes or a castle in Burgundy, the family name behind a winery remains the very essence of its brand.

One morning, I drove an hour and a half south of Mendoza city to the Uco Valley, a region of vineyards in the Andean foothills in Argentina, to meet two members of the Zuccardi family, who are the standard-bearers of family entrepreneurship in the region. Each generation of Zuccardis has built upon the legacy of the previous, culminating in their latest (and grandest)
Our decisions are long-term decisions. Because I’m not the owner of anything. I’m taking care of the legacy of the family. I received something and I take care of it for the next generation.

for the next generation.

A huge door has opened for us that we didn’t pay enough attention to before – digital.

As the co-founder of an independent sustainable clothing brand, Industry Of All Nations, I would have told you just a few months ago that our three physical stores were critical to the success of the company moving forward. We had a five-year plan to open stores all over the world – a plan that was central to our strategy. Now, we’re not so sure.

A huge door has opened for us that we didn’t pay enough attention to before – digital. It sounds simple, but when you
Please help!

In her podcast How’s Work, the psychotherapist Esther Perel talks about if you were raised for autonomy or loyalty. Are you a do-it-all-yourself kind of person, or a rely-on-others kind of person?

I’m definitely the former. I run a female creative agency and collective, and sometimes I find myself consciously or unconsciously taking work away from my co-founder, mostly against her will, and making it my problem.

When the WHO first declared the pandemic (which seems like ages ago now, right?), I was on set with a client and freaked out. I felt an overwhelming amount of pressure and responsibility to get it all right, to be ahead of the curve and ahead of client expectation, to keep it all together, to pivot and galvanise.

Asking for help for an autonomous person like me isn’t easy. It feels like a failure.

I felt the pressure to somehow keep going, to finish our existing projects and bring in new ones. I had to keep afloat, to be an example of stability and sanity for others on our team.

I was scared to tell our client that what we had planned to film would no longer be possible. I ran our finance numbers and I ran them again. I put on a brave face and I switched into the mode I always do: autonomy. But soon it was too much and I finally said the words: I need help.

This doesn’t sound like a big deal, but it was incredibly monumental to me. The client was happy to switch tasks and we began working on a project filmed entirely in isolation, via video submissions from dozens of women who were all excited to get on board. My co-founder took over the running of our Zoom calls and a team member took the initiative to ramp up our new membership scheme to keep their writers employed and their offering digital. Even things I didn’t think I could do digital have done so successfully. From Zoom styling sessions and YouTube hair tutorials to virtual ‘hair wash day’ that saw hundreds of women deep-condition their hair together.

Asking for help for an autonomous person like me isn’t easy. It feels like a failure, a last resort – but perhaps a silver lining of this experience was learning that all of life’s blessings are on the other side of that phrase. What I, and so many others, are most_enable_consent with is vulnerability. It reminded me I need to get out of my own head – problems can seem much bigger there – and workshop thoughts with others. More often than not, people are willing to shift things to make things happen for you, to jump on board, to show support. You just have to ask for help.

Tiana Tamburro is the co-founder of Female Narratives, a creative agency and female collective that connects brands with creative women.

The rise of ‘chill professionals’

Almost two years ago, I founded Jarzzi Club, but without any bubbles, jetted whirlpools or hot tubs in sight. It is, in fact, a private chat room for people building exciting new brands and products in tech, fashion, food and media, with founders and creators from TikTok, Death to Stock and Product Hunt among many others.

As such, I have an interesting view into the daily lives and working practices of hundreds of interesting people. A trend I’ve picked up on recently, which has been amplified by the current crisis and coming from the majority of my group’s most successful members, is a sense of what I’m calling ‘chill professionalism’. The people that display it mostly start projects as hobbies or side projects, slowly turn them into exciting businesses – a somewhat different approach to starting a business to make money, and which naturally leads to a more relaxed entrepreneurial journey.

The chill professionals are experimental. They like hanging out with friends and tinkering on projects rather than anything that feels too much like hard work. But still, this approach is churning out some of the biggest, most exciting things I’ve ever come across with. It is, for example, one member in their 20s, Andy McCune, just had his app Unfold, an online toolkit for storytellers, acquired by Squarespace.

These founders know that starting a business is like embarking on a never-ending problem-solving mission; they are fully aware that there will never be problems. But they choose to tackle everything head on, but with a light-hearted approach, rather than getting emotionally hung up when things don’t always go to plan. By viewing starting a business more like starting a project that you’re currently testing removing a lot of the pressure of having to succeed, both mentally and socially.

Look into the chat room today, someone’s laughing at a situation they’ve found themselves in with hundreds of units of stock having arrived in the wrong colours (and others are laughing with them while pitching in novel solutions to help). Someone else is celebrating having had a baby boy and having sold their 10-year-old bicycle company in the same week, while another founder has just raised £1m in funding.

These messages are posted in our ‘highs and lows’ Slack channel, which sees a lot of posts on both ends of that spectrum. No ego, no drama, just internet friends tinkering around with huge ideas and at the same time starting Spotify playlists and stupid tweets. Although it has been an incredibly challenging time for most businesses over the past few months, it has become clear that people are more likely to support you if you aren’t continuously broadcasting how much you’re smashing it. When founders believe they have to ‘fake it until they make it’, it stops them from forming genuinely helpful relationships with their entrepreneurial peers.

After all, being a great business operator is master of the art of having shit permanently thrown at you and turning that into a positive outcome. Sure, this is a mad and rubbish time for most founders too. A ‘chill professional’ approach to starting things should stand you in good stead for weathering the bad times while staying grounded through the good ones.

As well as Jarzzi Club, Marty Bell is the founder of the online radio station Pooolside FM, sunglasses brand Tens, and Nude, a finance app that helps you buy your first home.

We aim to pay you.’ What?

A

n Instagram ad keeps appearing on my timeline, shouting at me every time I open the app. ‘The economy is crashing unless you are selling hand sanitiser.’ The doom-pedlar behind this fantastically odious caption is Jeff Walker, author of Launch. An Internet Millionaire’s Secret Formula to Sell Almost Anything Online, Build a Business You Love, and Live the Life.

This is an example of how he generated sales to accrue enormous personal wealth – then yeah, not for me.

Fear-based marketing seems a particularly ghoulish route right now, when the UK is in the hole so badly that even adversarial party politics can comfortably be seen as a positive outcome. This may sound trite, but they can and not make things worse for themselves. This may sound trite, but it’s a real problem with panicising founders tacking to the bottom with their kneec’d-out, or even pivoting without making proper viability assessments.

Lucky me that I can observe this from a position of security as I no longer sell stuff, have investors, manufacturing agreements or stock. My business these days is selling time and my opinions. Despite being home alone with a four-year-old, the pressure on me, with my mortgage-free house and garden, are obviously non-comparable. Of course I can think straight.

Some of the most impressive examples of courage-under-fire I’ve
been coming across are from the freelance community, who have been badly hit not just through loss of sales but also through non-payment of outstanding invoices. Many of the ones I have been speaking to are making a living selling goods or services to small businesses, and already had poor payment terms of 60 days or more. This meant that when the lockdown started it hit small businesses, and already had poor payment terms of 60 days or more. This meant that when the news started getting a bit Black Mirror, they kept on supplying their customers, with a growing sense of dread that they might never get paid – either the outstanding debt or for the goods or services they were delivering in the days leading up to lockdown.

The culture of businesses acting like everything is fine right up until the wheels come off is one that runs deep, and some of these suppliers were calling their customers to check that everything was ok and were reassured. And, sure, everything was ok, until it wasn’t. As dates on invoices came and went, and it also became apparent that all the usual legal, systemic back-up available to freelancers to help them collect outstanding debts – such as lawyer’s services and small-claims courts – weren’t available anymore. A couple of suppliers in this position forwarded me emails they had received from some customers, sent on group mailouts, saying, ‘We cannot pay you’. Pretty scary. The focus needs to be on supporting freelancers to keep their head in a good place so they can salvage what they can and not make things worse for themselves.

Businesses don’t need to be reminded to be scared – they are all scared. The focus needs to be on supporting founders to keep their head in a good place so they can salvage what they can and not make things worse for themselves.

We are all operating in an age of high-frequency change. Overlaid on existing large, multi-decade trends are many small, fast waves of change enabled by a globalised market and the friction-lowering effect of technology. These high-frequency waves carry rapid shifts in everything from consumer products to popular culture, from corporate systems to customer attitudes, and they can be extremely disruptive.

Businesses around the world are finding that the pace of this change is accelerating; more obstacles are appearing and creating an increasingly complex landscape in which to manage a successful business, both now and in the future.

So, how do you survive?

The phenomenon of high-frequency change has forced organisations big and small to think differently about how they do business. The challenges they face in preparing for the uncertainty of tomorrow comes down to three core characteristics; characteristics that are very similar to those we see in the world’s best athletes.

Top sports stars build the agility and strength they require anything on there and enjoy the reach that the platform affords them.

It is pretty hard to know what new social behaviours will stick around after Covid-19 eventually goes away. When we’re finally allowed to go outside again properly. When we can eat sushi and listen to amplified music and sing in alleys, I hope we remember all this stuff and continue to enable and support the businesses that put people first during this mind-bending time.

Fleur Emery is a startup expert and podcaster.

BOOK EXTRACT

Into the future

Living through such uncertain times means it’s now more important than ever to prepare for the weeks and months ahead rather than focussing on the day to day, however daunting that may feel, says Tom Cheeseurght in his new book ‘Future-Proof Your Business’. And to do that, you should build your business in the same way you would train an athlete.

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How long does it take your organisation to make decisions?

From the simplest leave approval or signing off on an expense to strategic decisions about entering a new market or investing in a new product, I regularly hear complaints from people wondering why major decisions take so long. Slow decision-making presents two distinct threats.

But you can future-proof your business by accelerating decision-making, through pushing power to the edge of the organisation and empowering those people at the edge to help make you more responsive. You can also improve the supply of good information to leaders like you to support more rapid strategic decisions. Building a culture of rapid response is vital to surviving in the long term, and the key to this is good decision-making at all levels.
LOOK AT THE DATA

How about your strategic decision-making? How fast, and how confidently, do you make big decisions? How much time is spent on the decision itself and how much on gathering the evidence and arguments to support it? How much are those decisions based on hard data and how much on intuition and gut feeling? The ideal situation is for decisions to be based on both empirical evidence and human judgement. Hard data will rarely give you the entire picture. A willingness to make calls based on experience and instincts is unlikely to stop being part of a leader’s make-up any time soon. But we do work in a world where better data is increasingly available. Instinct may be the ultimate decision-maker, but there is no argument for making decisions without the data if they are available.

A proportion of the data required to drive the decision will come from inside the organisation, from your finance systems, marketing data and operational systems such as stock control. A proportion will come from outside, whether that is market research, analyst reports, partners and suppliers or external consultants. These data will usually be passed through multiple hands before they reach the ultimate decision-maker, resulting in two problems common in far too many of the organisations.

First, the collation and presentation of the data takes a long time. It is an enormous manual effort, usually laid on members of the finance or marketing teams. The data are in the company systems but often held in disparate places and in a variety of formats. There are also varying levels of confidence in the data.

Second, the data are often shaped into a narrative that supports the beliefs or interests of the people looking to drive the decision. Sometimes this is for the avoidance of negative outcomes for the person preparing or approving the data (once described to me as CFA, or cover your ass, interventions). If the data show underperformance of a unit, its head might look to insert mitigating factors or even soften the numbers by tweaking the period they cover or including additional revenue streams.

This may sound rather fraudulent on the face of it, but the person concerned may be absolutely convinced that this is how they present a fair picture of the situation. Sometimes the data are ‘shaped’ to present a clearer case for a particular plan.

Again, this may not be deliberate fraud but rather the person presenting the most compelling story for a plan in which they wholeheartedly believe.

The result of these two factors combined is that the decisions themselves are often delayed and predicated on less-than-transparent evidence.

ATHLETIC ORGANISATIONS

Being future-proof means not standing still. Not assuming that what makes for a successful business today will continue to ensure a successful business tomorrow. It never stops. This is why there is so much focus on delegation and creating the time for strategic thought and action. Because agility and change is the business of management now. Optimisation is the role of people close to the action. Leaders must lead change. It comes back to the analogy of the athlete. The greatest sportspersons are not necessarily the ones with the most technical skill or talent but the ones with the vision. The footballer who always looks up to spot that critical pass. The runner who knows their opponent and times their break perfectly. In an age of high-frequency change, leaders who build future-proof businesses will be the ones who keep their heads up and focused on tomorrow.

This is an edited extract from Future-Proof Your Business by Tom Cheesewright (Penguin Business; £8.99).
The ‘godfather of sustainability’ – and the man who coined the concept of the Triple Bottom Line – sets out the guiding principles he believes every business now needs to follow.

Whether launching something new or adapting an existing business, it needs to be regenerative – that’s according to author, entrepreneur and pioneer in sustainability John Elkington. ‘This is more than a fad. Regenerative businesses represent a huge opportunity for ambitious startups to lead the way in the recovery from the pandemic,’ he says. His new book, Green Swans: The Coming Boom in Regenerative Capitalism, takes an optimistic, affirmative view on what’s next.

But where to start? ‘Rather than following a straight “how to be regenerative” list, set up your business according to a set of principles,’ he says. That won’t be easy, but small businesses have agility on their side. ‘Regenerative businesses can become Green Swans. They’ll have greater resilience than companies using current business models,’ he adds. Here he and Louise Roper, CEO of Volans, a company which preps businesses for implementing change, outline three guiding principles to follow:

Critique your value

How can your business model - the way you supply your product or service - be intrinsically linked to contributing to the health and wellbeing of the whole? That is if you stop supplying your product or service, the world – people, the biosphere as a whole – would be worse off.

This is different from saying, ‘I provide a life-saving drug, ergo my business is regenerative’ – it’s about both what you are providing and how you are providing it. Your business model, or models, must be designed to create value and restore natural and social balance. And, if they are to help drive regenerative (aka Green Swain) outcomes, then they must be designed to drive the production and packaging, distribution, sales or local councils that can recycle your packaging. Often it involves getting in touch with either the local community, competitors or people in a different business altogether who work in the same physical location or with the same material as you. Or every your own customers. Who can you collaborate with to ensure that your business, at every point, is doing the most it can to restore environmental and social balance in that place?

Look for collaborators within the value chain

A lot of the questions mentioned will necessitate collaboration throughout your value chain – be it suppliers of materials, partners in production, packaging, distribution, sales or local councils that can recycle your packaging. Often it involves getting in touch with either the local community, competitors or people in a different business altogether who work in the same physical place.

'Every business has a flow of money, materials and information flowing through it. They key is to look at these and aim to create a circular business.

Focus on how to design out waste from your production process and packaging, as well as considering what your customer does with your product in use and when finished.

A great example of a circular business is London-based Toast Ale, who use bread that would otherwise have gone to waste from delis and bakeries in the brewing process. Toast Ale has taken on the broader mission to end food waste – by actively sharing the recipe for their pale ale both to home brewers and other startups across the world, they are encouraging this model to be copied rather than working for their own world domination.

What happens to your product during and after use? Can you (or someone else) take back the packaging – or even the entire product – and refurbish it to ensure no materials go to waste?

01. SET IT OUT IN THE PLAN

‘When drafting the two-year strategy for your brand, define both social and economic goals. Whether that’s “support a community in need” or “work with the suppliers who adhere to guidelines of sustainability”, define the KPIs for these with the same rigour you define for the economic goals. When considering brand communication, think not only in terms of the share of voice and product-quality perception, but also in terms of social-good perception. Your brand communication strategy should incorporate these goals, and your engagement plan should have clear and concise actions that support it. Make sure that everything you put forward is believable and ownable by your brand – otherwise, consumers will see through it.’

02. RETHINK COLLABS

‘While we may be well past the time when a fashion collab can excite anyone, a new breed of collaborations are springing up. They go beyond short-term commercial and PR buzz to something with a greater social impact – and no less buzz. For example, dairy company Chobani partnered with coffee seller Trade to support a community of independent coffee roasters. The effort is spurred by a common belief that food (and coffee) can be a positive force.’

03. BEHAVIOURAL CONTAGION

‘It’s worth asking: how can we activate our brand community to do something good in society? How do we set the example of positive influence that trickles down to my customers’ communities? In the past, cigarette smoking rose and fell thanks to it; today, some areas, like food and sustainability, are subject to it. The natural human instinct to imitate and conform should be used for good. Once the pandemic is over, brands do social-good by encouraging behavioural mimicry (and not just in terms of Instagram aesthetics). Any brand with a customer base can mobilise peer pressure.’
FIVE THINGS YOU LEARN WHEN... YOU OPEN MEXICO'S FIRST ZERO-WASTE SUPERMARKET

Jade Villagomez left her job at Procter & Gamble in Paris after attending a talk on zero waste. In 2017 she opened Mexico City’s first zero-waste supermarket. Here’s what she’s learned.

I went travelling around the world after I finished at P&G. I went to Barcelona, London and Berlin and spoke to people who owned zero-waste stores. At that time I wasn’t speaking about building a store because I hadn’t imagined opening one, I just wanted to know more about the movement. It meant I already had the contacts – I wrote to them and was like, “Hey, remember me?” Some people ignored me but some people answered. They said it would be difficult and a lot of work, but you have to be patient.’

‘I’m happy I didn’t take on investment at the start. It’s meant I don’t have that stress of showing them the numbers.’

I had no idea whether they [the local community] would be receptive to the idea. It had been hard to explain to my family, too. But as soon as it opened it was well received by the business. A lot of people didn’t know the movement – you have to teach them and show them, without being aggressive. Every time I receive a new customer I tell them how we operate and explain the practicalities of it – now more than 50% of the customers bring their own containers and that’s great.

They’re now refilling my sacks and changing their practices with other customers too. Weell in bulk at markets which is quite weird, and we talk about the movement. We tell people, “We have a store, you can buy in bulk,” and they recognise and understand the concept. People also started talking about us on social media – a girl who had visited the store early on set up a Facebook group a year later, all about zero-waste, and she started talking about us. Of course, there’s a lot of greenwashing from other stores here – people will know when you don’t do it right.

Finding the right backers

In order for A Good Company (AGC) to grow the right way, Anders Ankarlid needed the right backers from day one. That meant investors he already had a relationship with, who he knew shared his view on the planet. Most investors are short term, looking to get their ROI. That’s not for us,’ says Ankarlid. ‘We’re not into the business of bitz-scaling through the roof with marketing profit not the bottom line. When we launch a new product, it’s unlikely to be perfect. If we had short-term owners, they wouldn’t appreciate our…geekery. Time is not fully compliant with profit.

Building from the inside out

‘It’s so important if you’re running a DTC brand that shipping works,’ says Ankarlid. For AGC, before thinking about products, its packaging was the priority. Noting the recycling and material issues with many supposedly eco-friendly packaging alternatives, it developed its own tapeless Stone Paper packaging, available in three sizes which other businesses can also buy. It took over three solid months of testing – with plenty of failures’ along the way.

anders ankarlid set up dtc business a good company (@agooodcom) with a clear intention: to offer a sustainable way of buying beautifully designed, environmentally friendly everyday products online. No matter how long it takes to perfect the product.

I had to start small and then grow, starting with a few products of high-quality. I started with less than 100 products and now we have more than 600. Sometimes things aren’t easily feasible at the beginning my suppliers were bringing their products in a sack – when I tried to give it back to them they said, “No, you can throw it away.” It was frustrating, but you need to be patient. They’re now refilling my sacks and changing their practices with other customers too. Theirs are growing with me. But patience is key – it will be more than a day; it took me more like 6-8 months.

There are two ways word has spread. One is going to events and hitting the streets. We sell in bulk at markets which is quite weird, and we talk about the movement. We tell people, “We have a store, you can buy in bulk,” and they recognise and understand the concept. People also started talking about us on social media – a girl who had visited the store early on set up a Facebook group a year later, all about zero-waste, and she started talking about us. Of course, there’s a lot of greenwashing from other stores here – people will know when you don’t do it right.

Time-intensive research

For Ankarlid, taking a long-term – and extremely rigorous – approach to product development is non-optional. ‘I don’t want any space for making shortcuts anymore. They won’t be there a few years.’ That means budgeting more cash for the development stage – something he admits is difficult and an insurmountable. Citing one recent example involving melted-down Kalashnikovs that involved ‘a ridiculous amount’ spent on development, they decided to test for one more week despite receiving good prototypes. A temperature issue in the mould meant they would have wasted 100kg of metal. ‘It can never be fixed by simply adding three months to a Gantt schedule. A curveball will come.’

…but hedging their bets

Given the time and financial costs of a product failing, the company focuses on spreading the risk. ‘We develop a lot of products at the same time,’ says Ankarlid. If we’re developing 10 products, we can learn at the same time between these products: share suppliers, share knowledge about raw materials. If something fails it’s not the end of the world as maybe we have nine other [lives].

Collaborating with factories

Creating a mutually beneficial relationship with manufacturers is also something Ankarlid has been keen to build out. Their factories are often involved in product development, which has meant lower MOQs (minimum order quantities) and cost savings. ‘We work transparently with a factory – we break it down into pieces rather than just get the unit price. It’s not just about cutting costs, it’s about understanding their operations and seeing where we can help too.’ AGC recently analysed the expenditure of its Turkish factory and realised they could link the factory with a cheaper shipping company.

Creating a lean machine

Naturally, a low burn-rate is key. ‘We don’t fly. We don’t have a fancy office. We’re always looking at what can we take away in terms of IT and be more efficient,’ says Ankarlid. That means even the smallest details are worth analysing: replacing Zoom with Google Meet, or calls fail, the company focuses...
Worker co-operatives have existed for centuries but remain underexplored— the Federation of Worker Co-operatives estimates there to be 800 of them in the US. That number’s on the rise though – partly down to startups embracing the model and, increasingly, businesses transitioning as retiring owners look to leave their creation in trusted hands.

There’s no single way to create a co-operative and that, combined with a lack of accessible intel on how it’s done, gives a clue into its relatively low uptake. Businesses looking to transition need an experienced facilitator to determine whether they’re suitable – that’s before the challenges of raising capital and deciding upon structure and governance. 

Worker co-operatives are becoming owner look to leave their creation in trusted hands. Worker co-operatives have existed for centuries but remain underexplored—the Federation of Worker Co-operatives estimates there to be 800 of them in the US. That number’s on the rise though – partly down to startups embracing the model and, increasingly, businesses transitioning as retiring owners look to leave their creation in trusted hands.

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**CASE STUDY:**

**THE STOCK PHOTO AGENCY**

Frustrated at the state of the stock photo and video industry, the founders of Stocksy United decided to reinvent the roll and launch a multi-class co-operative.

The starting point for Canadian company Stocksy is from a familiar narrative. Members of the founding team had sold their business stock to Getty in 2007, which was subsequently bought by a VC firm. Targers shifted and the founders lost sight of their mission.

The stock agency market became saturated—royalty rates (typically between 15% and 45%) and photo quality were decreasing. Photographers felt exploited. Seeing a gap in the market to around 1,100 contributing members (carefully picked from over 20,000 applications) and 30 employees. It operates as a multi-class co-op with three tiers—board of directors, employees and contributors—all of whom have a say. We’re not here to take down the big guys, we want to provide our contributors a place where they can create their best possible work without worrying we’re going to cut the royalty rates behind them,’ says Ross. As such, images are priced between CA$10 and CA$100. The artists are paid a high percentage of the royalties: 50% on standard licenses and 75% on extended licenses. And, if Stocksy is left with a surplus at the end of the year, it’s shared out between members depending on how much they contributed. Between 2013 and 2019, Stocksy paid out over CAS$4.7m to its members.

Even finding a lawyer who knew what a multi-class co-op was and could help them draw up their initial bylaws proved difficult. The real hurdles arose, however, once they started selling and running the business, which continues evolving today. Being decisive and competitive in the market while also being responsive to our members—sometimes those things can be at odds with each other,’ explains Ross. With so many stakeholders, the decision-making process can be slow. Members are

**STRENGTHS**

Individual motivation, company performance. ‘Workers are more committed, engaged, innovative, loyal to the company and willing to help others improve their behaviour. Employee ownership and a supportive corporate culture leads to better productivity and lower turnover.’

**WEAKNESSES**

Not a quick fix. ‘Since most majority owned firms are a result of transitions, if the corporate culture is poisoned or if the company has not had a previous history of stable and successful growth, employee ownership won’t rescue a bad situation.’

You still need managers. ‘Despite the common view that the employee ownership won’t rescue a bad situation.’

Hard to find optimum level. ‘Each company has to find the appropriate level of worker empowerment. You have to get that right. Research shows employees are most empowered at job and department level – not being on the board of directors.’

**EXPRESS OPINION**

Professor Joseph Blasi is director of the Rutgers Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing and co-author of The Citizen’s Share: Reducing Inequality in the 21st Century. He outlines the key strengths and weaknesses of the model.

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**THE TWO OTHER MAIN MODELS OF EMPLOYEE-OWNED CO-OPERATIVE:**

01. Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) – an employee benefit plan that gives workers ownership of stocks or shares in the company. Dominant in the US.

02. Employee Trust – an indirect form of employee ownership in which a trust holds a controlling stake in a company on behalf of all its employees. Dominant in the UK.

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INSIDE THE…
ECOSIA OFFICE

With the office environment undergoing big changes, this seems a suitable time to reassess the workspace and consider tweaks – no matter how small – that can make a positive environmental difference. Ecosia, the carbon-negative search engine that has planted over 90 million trees and donated more than 80% of its profits to reforestation, can safely say sustainability is its bag. The team invited Courier inside their new office in a former factory in Berlin’s Kreuzberg district to shine a light on the sustainable systems and hacks they’ve put in place.

ENERGY WASTE
The majority of the office power points have small gadgets installed which are set to turn off at night to eliminate energy waste.

ENERGY
Ecosia uses a green energy provider, Naturstrom, and produce its own solar electricity.

HEATING HACKS
Thermostats are installed on all heaters so that heating turns off at nights and weekends; windows are double-glazed with heat-reflecting foil behind the heaters to maximise efficiency.

BUYING IN BULK
The company buys all produce – including coffee, chocolate, nuts and snacks – organically and in bulk to reduce packaging.

VEGGIES
There’s a small roof terrace where the company grows vegetables in the summer – for compost the team use containers of Biochar that quickly compost food waste.

DESIGN SPEC
A biophilic design has been created through the use of lots of plants and natural paint colours, while all desks have a view of a window.

MATERIAL CHOICES
Natural materials are used here, such as sisal, seagrass, hessian, wood and linen. Cork, bamboo, linen, cotton and FSC certified wood are preferred for new furniture.

FURNITURE
Plenty of the furniture is from the previous office but has been sanded back, oiled, painted, upholstered or repurposed entirely.

BIKE PERKS
Employees can have their bikes checked and basic issues fixed on a regular ‘Bike Repair Day’ in order to encourage them to ride to work.

SUPPLIER APPRAISAL
The company has a ‘black list’ and a ‘green list’ of producers they purchase from – each month they look at their orders to see how they can improve.
**THE DESKS**

Employees work from handmade height-adjustable desks, built from scavenged tree trunks and 240-year-old oak trees, sustainably sourced from the Lübecker Stadtforst – a local forest that operates on permaculture principles.

**THE FLOOR**

A concrete floor was laid and sealed with a semi-gloss finish. The polished concrete, together with the white walls, reflects light, therefore reducing the need for artificial lighting during the day.

**THE LIGHTS**

All of the office and dining room lights are secondhand, GDR-era factory lights. Eco-friendly, dimmable LED light globes are also used throughout.

**THE CHAIRS**

Most of the chairs are secondhand; many came from their old office, and prior to that were sourced from flea markets or gifted.

**THE TABLES**

The dining table is made from 50-year-old reclaimed floorboards. A high meeting table was made from up-cycled scaffolding planks, while scrap wood sourced from ‘Ebay Kleinanzeigen’ was used to create the bistro tables.

**THE WALLS**

Kalklitir and Kreidezeit natural lime paints and eco-friendly wallpapers are used in the soundproofed booths that function as meeting or focus rooms.

**THE OFFCUTS**

All of the oak offcuts from the kitchen countertops are used: the whiteboard frames, poster frames, wooden shelves, ledges and ergonomic monitor stands were all made from leftover oak pieces.

**THE BATHROOM**

Products used include eco-soap in glass pumps, Einhorn tampons (another Berlin B-Corp) and recycled toilet paper. Cotton hand towels are used while a non-electric ‘po-dusche’ bidet is installed in one toilet.

**THE LAYOUT**

The layout is designed to feel airy and open but retain the sense of zones and offer privacy. Divider walls come with overlight windows, there are soundproof telephone booths, different sized meeting rooms, a hidden mezzanine loft bed and a large, separated kitchen/dining/social space.

**THE AIR**

All windows can be fully opened so natural air can circulate, while the company has a large selection of purifying plants.

**THE ENERGY**

The company uses a green energy provider, Naturstrom, and is powered by 100% renewable energy. Subsidies are available for employees who also use Naturstrom.

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**EXPERT ADVICE**

Alexis Bainger is Ecosia’s ‘happiness officer’ and founder of Baingerous Spaces, the interior design firm that designed the new office. ‘We try to do everything in our office and personal lives to make conscious decisions,’ says Bainger. Here she highlights ways that founders can apply more sustainable practices in their offices.

Bank green

‘Ecosia uses a “green” bank [the ethical German bank GLS] which invests money in sustainable German entrepreneurs, rather than investing in fossil fuels as most banks do.’ The company has published an insightful blog post on this subject.

Reduce energy consumption

‘Use LED light globes, paint in light colours, install wifi light globes which can be controlled separately, or install sensors so lights turn off when nobody is in the room. Install thermostats on heaters so they turn off at nights and weekends. There are many smart solutions that can be controlled by apps.’

Use secondhand tech

‘There are numerous companies that repair and resell tech equipment. We always look on afbshop.de and refurbed.de before buying new products. Likewise for books.’

Check your supplies

‘Along with trying to print only when necessary (and reusing scrap paper), order recycled printing paper, Post-It Notes, pens and toilet paper. Get pens and markers which can be refilled.’

Eliminate packaging

‘Buy in bulk containers or from companies that deliver packaging-free. At Ecosia we have a small team that meets monthly to review our orders and waste and see where we can improve.’

Clean green

‘Most regular cleaning products contain ingredients that are toxic, hazardous, non-biodegradable and from non-renewable resources. Choose eco-friendly products – if you have cleaners, ask them to exclusively use them.’
MEET THE... INVESTORS

 Courier chats to two US-based investors with a keen interest in sustainability to discuss what’s currently piquing their interest – and what’s turning them off.

James Joaquin
Obvious Ventures
Los Angeles

Co-founder at Obvious Ventures, investors in world-positive consumer brands.
@obviousvc

Sari Azout Bakalarz
Level Ventures
Miami

Early stage consumer investor at Level Ventures and runs strategy for Rokk3r, a startup studio.

What business models are interesting you currently?
‘Many sustainable businesses have innovated on materials; I’m interested in businesses that combine that with business model innovation. Horizontal “as a service” models that allow any business to tap into sustainability, like Repack, or aggregators that reduce the burden of choice, like Package Free.’

What sectors are hot for ethically-minded brands right now?
‘We’re excited about two consumer sectors at the intersection of purpose and profit: plant-based foods and wellness. Shifting away from eating animals has a profound positive impact on both climate and human health – our investment in Beyond Meat is a great proof point. In wellness, we saw great success with Olly vitamins and we’re now investing in CBD wellness with Beam.’

What do you want to hear from a sustainable founder?
‘I want to see a product that actually works. Perhaps there’s some margin, but to ultimately replace incumbents, products need to be better and accessible. The bottom line is: consumers are willing to go green, but don’t want to sacrifice.’

What buzzwords are you tired of hearing?
‘I’m tired of hearing the term “science-backed” in pitches. The term “sustainable” as a catch-all I also think does a disservice, as sustainability is a wide spectrum. I want to see more closed loop products; businesses being responsible for a product’s end of life.’

How do you assess the trade-off between profit and doing good?
‘Maximising shareholder value can’t be the only filter companies

Plenty of founders multitask, but not many need to take a chocolate-tasting exam. When Wilf Marriott decided to branch out of his family’s cocoa farm business, St Vincent Cocoa Company, to launch Islands Chocolate in 2018, it was just one of the many roles he’d take on. Having previously worked on cocoa farms, in chocolate factories and as a cocoa salesman, Marriott wanted to offer a sustainable, ethical alternative to the large conglomerates who he felt lacked passion towards the provenance or flavour of cocoa.

That means being at the source. Working in tandem with St Vincent Cocoa Company, Islands grows the highest-yielding cocoa varieties using natural agroforestry systems. They pay higher wages than those advocated by Fair Trade and have employed over 200 people. Being on the ground is, according to Marriott, ‘the only way to guarantee there are sustainable practices’. Islands plays a prominent role in the community: between 70-80 independent farmers have been taught how to grow cocoa, and among other local projects they’ve refurbished a school library.

With a 75g bar retailing at €4-50 and a saturated market dominated by the likes of Lindt and Green & Black’s, Marriott soon realised that to scale up he would need other routes to market. Enter the premium hotel and restaurant sectors, which accounted for 95% of sales prior to Covid-19, and where customers are more discerning about traceability.‘With retail there are so many people to go through,’ says Marriott. ‘But if you walk into a restaurant, you’ll know a head chef is in there. All I need is half an hour.’

Making chocolate in bulk combined with a growth in demand has meant tweaking the supply chain. Most of the chocolate is now made through a chocolatier in Belgium (‘it’s 34 degrees in St Vincent!’), but Marriott retains control, visiting several times a month. ‘We work on the recipes and I make the first batches. That means being at the source. Working in tandem with St Vincent Cocoa Company, Islands grow the highest-yielding cocoa varieties using natural agroforestry systems. They pay higher wages than those advocated by Fair Trade and have employed over 200 people. Being on the ground is, according to Marriott, ‘the only way to guarantee there are sustainable practices’. Islands plays a prominent role in the community: between 70-80 independent farmers have been taught how to grow cocoa, and among other local projects they’ve refurbished a school library.

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ILLUSTRATION Ana Cuna.
CASE STUDY
GROWING SLOW WITH STORY MFG

Despite increasing popularity and verging on cult status, fashion label Story MFG has kept its relatively small-scale, slow-moving design process the same – preferring to gradually build a relationship with manufacturers.

Since launching in 2013, UK-based clothing brand Story MFG has stuck to a ‘slow made’ ethos, creating the company’s distinctive unisex clothing at highly-skilled manufacturers in India and Thailand that employ time-honoured techniques, natural dyes, recycled fabrics and renewable energy. With production runs limited due to the laborious nature of the design process – and having only recently hired their first full-time staff – the team have consciously kept operations small. Here founders Katy and Saeed Al-Rubeyi discuss the effects of their approach.

SYMBIOTIC GROWTH
SAEED: ‘We learn and rise together. They [manufacturers] The Colours of Nature] make 90% of our stuff and we’re 80% of their revenue. There’s a strong friendship and shared values, and an interest in what can be done with the limits of natural dyes and how we can develop the space. They didn’t know about making samples and fashion shows; we didn’t know how long it takes to do certain dyes and the implications of the seasons.’

KATY: ‘When you have a brand you’re told you need to hire all these people to manage. We thought, actually here’s all these people being themselves and that breeds an authenticity.’

THE LIBERTY OF LIMITATIONS
SAEED: ‘There are so many limits but actually it’s quite freeing. We’ve got five or six months to make a piece – and there’s the natural limit of colours and the weather. You have to innovate from within, working with the exact same manufacturers in India and Thailand that employ tradition, using natural dyes, recycled fabrics and renewable energy. With production runs limited due to the laborious nature of the design process – and having only recently hired their first full-time staff – the team have consciously kept operations small. Here founders Katy and Saeed Al-Rubeyi discuss the effects of their approach.

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EMBRACING INCONSISTENCY
KATY: ‘No one complains when wine tastes differently year to year. The problem we have is that occasionally we photograph something and it looks different when it’s actually made. We have control but only towards the later stages. I have a picture in my mind and then it might be completely different, but it’s always something quite lovely. In that sense, we do have to roll with it.’

NOT MAKING INSTANT HIRES
SAEED: ‘When you have a brand you’re told you need to hire all these people to manage. We thought, actually here’s all these people being themselves and that breeds an authenticity. We need PR but we would have suffocated if we’d done it straight away. It’s the story that brings value to the item. Just knowing how something was put together – I’d choose that over something else every day.’

NEXT GEN
SAEED: ‘We always explain why we do what we do – why we fly or use recycled plastic. We’re part of the conversation – as much as it’s important for consumers to know, it’s more so for the next batch of designers to know and not compromise. Sustainability is a large word but it doesn’t mean anything in particular; it’s often a big red arrow pointed at something. What we can do is have a positive impact on what we do.’

APPLYING AN... ETHICAL APPROACH AT BOBBY UNIVERSE

It’s something of a stretch to call an accessories producer ‘sustainable’, but Emma Rosenhain, founder of Australian handbag brand Bobby Universe (@bobbyuniverse) is incorporating strong ethics into every facet of her business.

01. MANUFACTURING GROUND RULES

Emma Rosenhain was keen to get the foundations laid right from the start. ‘There’s a tendency to always talk about product quality as the number one thing, but for me, the ethics of our production was profoundly important – particularly while establishing our manufacturing base in China,’ she says.

With an artisanal labour force handcrafting her products offshore, Rosenhain chose a factory approved by SMETA to guarantee the workers’ safety, health and human rights. Factory managers are trained in labour standards and ethics, building standards are maintained, and the artisans are paid appropriately and work regular hours.

02. SOURCING THE RIGHT MATERIALS

While the use of leather is something of a lightning rod in the post-vegan age, Rosenhain maintains that the leather used, which is strictly a byproduct of India’s meat industry, has the least impact on the environment. She doesn’t believe any clothing or accessory producer can legitimately call itself sustainable, but maintains that the fashion industry can do a lot better in terms of environmental ethics by using non-polluting manufacturing processes and natural materials. She adds, ‘Natural materials break down faster than synthetics, so that’s one of our key pillars that will never change.’

Her next materials to explore? Cactus and pineapple leathers.

03. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Having suffered from mental health issues, Rosenhain is conscious of fashion and social media’s duality. As she has grown her brand into a six-figure business, she’s used its increasing clout to create ‘Be You’ video campaigns on her website, where inspirational women – such as dancer and choreographer Sophie Apollonia – share personal stories on the subject of mental wellbeing. ‘The business is a supporter of Beyond Blue, an Australian mental health charity, donating 2% of its profits to it. In fashion, I think there’s a responsibility to be doing more than just going after sales,’ says Rosenhain. ‘For me, that means shining a light on mental health.’

A numerical score (out of 100) that indicates the level of reporting of a company’s climate change initiatives.

Carbon Disclosure Rating
A system where consumers share access to products or services by a peer-to-peer model, rather than individual ownership.

Community Investment
Businesses invest in strategic long-term community projects with charities and local organisations, rather than providing one-off donations.

Differential Pricing
This refers to the charging of different prices for the same product to different customers – typically linked to financial situation or disabilities.

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Green Procurement
A strategy of buying products with a reduced environmental impact in direct comparison to similar products.

Remanufacturing
Rebuilding, repairing, or restoring a product to meet the same consumer standards as new products.

Supply Chain Transparency
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Michelin-starred chef Elizabeth Haigh launched her Singaporean counter-style restaurant Mei Mei at London’s Borough Market in November 2019. After rave reviews, the business was beginning to thrive – before the pandemic forced its closure. Here she details the ups and downs of an unprecedented couple of months.

1 MID MARCH 2020
CLOSING THE RESTAURANT

‘The day we have to officially close the site to the public is probably one of the worst days I’ve ever had. On the last day we did a flash sale of everything in the shop and gave stuff to charity – I didn’t want anything to go to waste. The next day there was this bubbling anxiety. I’m a control freak, I need to know exactly what’s going on but there was nothing within our control. Information is coming in trickles – our life savings have gone into this project.’

2 MID MARCH 2020
FURLoughing CONUNDRUMS

‘I don’t put the staff on furloughed leave straight away – I decide to pay them in accrued holiday. I feel like there’s so much misinformation out there. Then we get more info about the furlough scheme and I’m able to make the decision to do it. The staff are all very relieved and it gives me a huge sense of relief. It feels like there’s a bit more security for the team – that was my main worry. I can work for nothing, but they can’t.’

3 LATE MARCH 2020
LOOKING AT FINANCIALS

‘Being part of Borough Market means we don’t pay business rates and are zero-rated, so we can’t even qualify for any business grants or loans – we’re just too young a company. It’s a kick in the teeth that there’s no financial support despite losing all our income. Not hearing from our insurance company is also driving us a bit insane; we pay so much for it – we pressed a claim straight away, but we just haven’t got any response.’

4 EARLY APRIL 2020
PIVOTING

‘Our brand is quite nimble and phase two of the company was always going to be the retail side. I spend almost two weeks researching what’s the best produce, what will sell and come to the conclusion it’s the Sambal chili paste, the Kaya coconut jam and spice mixes. I research into subscription services but it gets complicated because of postage. Luckily I’ve already done a lot of the legwork for the e-commerce in terms of recipe testing – that’s easy.’

5 MID APRIL 2020
LAUNCH DAY

‘We launch the site to our newsletter subscribers, which is about 200 people; our hardcore supporters. The website crashes because of demand – we have £1,000 of orders within six hours. It’s a shine of positivity; it makes me feel that people want to support Mei Mei, because all of this is going to support the company. It helps us cover our rent. Everyone is messaging us really positive things and seem really excited – knowing there’s demand there is a really positive thing.’

6 MID APRIL 2020
WFH

‘I’m loving spending time with my son and seeing all his changes but it’s really difficult. It’s like you’re wearing two hats all the time – trying to be a mum but my brain is somewhere else, thinking about getting all these orders out. Every lunchtime is spent together and we go on our daily walk. Stuff like explaining to a two year old why a park’s closed – managing that brings up your stress a lot, and coming back into work afterwards is tough.’

7 MID APRIL 2020
PRODUCTION CHALLENGES

‘We have all these orders come through and I have to make about double what I have in stock, because I didn’t set a stock level. I have to make 14kgs of coconut jam! I get a lot of messages like “the website’s crashed” and “can you help us?” I’m not an e-commerce, distribution or packaging expert, I’m just a chef. My phone is bleeping and bleeping. There are only so many arms you’ve got, especially with our staff furloughed. I’ve counted on asking favours of my sisters, mostly for moral support.’

8 LATE APRIL 2020
DELIVERY TRIAL AND ERROR

‘On the first day of using our courier service, two of the deliveries go missing and a customer angrily messages me. I’m livid. I try to get hold of the company and the driver, but they just treat us appallingly. I feel so much anger – we should all be looking out for each other right now. I find a new company but it means I have to increase the shipping costs. It feels like we’re sticking our finger in the air to see which way the wind blows at the moment.’

To check what Elizabeth’s up to between issues, follow her at @the_modernchef
The home life and habits of a jewellery maker in Greece, a composer in Los Angeles, a dog trainer and yoga teacher in London, and an Australian chef – as photographed by their partners, neighbours and friends.
Leila McNeelance is founder of Huxley & Hooch, a dog training and behaviour consultation service based in Walthamstow, London. ‘I’ve had way too many careers already,’ she says. ‘I was on the music gig circuit for a bit but I wasn’t very fulfilled.’ A dog-lover, she started taking dog behaviour courses and attending live seminars — and was hooked. She’s now a qualified trainer, but since the pandemic has shifted to remote sessions by video call. Here, she’s shot by her partner @dan_rosss.

ON 3 YEAR-OLD HUXLEY:
‘I found our dog Hux on a run. He was roaming around the streets of Walthamstow — we don’t know whether he was dumped. He was microchipped to the original breeder so we managed to get his information — and we ended up adopting him. He’s a Jack Russell cross. I’ve always said I’d never get a terrier and I’ve ended up with the most terrier of terriers! Now I love them. Hux is lovely, but has so many issues. Through training him, I realised that I love working with anxious dogs. Sure, I love working with puppies, don’t get me wrong — puppies are the best — but working with rescue dogs is really rewarding.’

KEEPING YOUR DOG HAPPY
1. Make their brains work
Mental stimulation will keep your dog’s brain happy and healthy, and will also help to tire them out so you can get in that much needed work (or Netflix) time in. There are loads of great toys available for mental enrichment, but I like to raid my recycling for quick, cheap homemade toys. Toilet roll inners are great tear-up toys with a treat popped inside, and cardboard boxes can be used to get your dog problem solving. But be sure to supervise them to prevent them ingesting things they shouldn’t...

2. Make your walk count
Lockdown or not, varying your walks is one of the best things you can do for your dog. Encourage some proper sniffing and exploring on every walk to ensure a tired, fulfilled dog when you get home. It’s really important that dogs get a chance to use their natural instincts, so you can always take their food out with you and give them opportunities to work for it, instead of just popping it in a bowl.

3. Leave them alone
It feels wrong to be at home and not loving on your dog all the time, but it’s important to make alone time part of their daily routine so they have time to be calm and rested, which is really necessary. It will also lessen the blow when everything goes back to normal eventually, and you have to leave them occasionally. Using food-based toys that encourage licking and chewing can be helpful for this if you’re struggling to get any time apart.

DAILY WALK
‘I went from saying “I’m a dog walker and do a little bit of training on the side” to one day saying, “You know what? I’m just as good as the other trainers in my area doing the same job.” I was constantly testing myself and giving myself fake scenarios, asking, “Would I know how to fix this?” And more and more, I was like, “I do know.” I’ve got my qualifications and I’m a dog trainer — but I still get imposter syndrome all the time. I’m also very young in a very old industry. That’s slowly changing though.’
HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DOG – STEP BY STEP

1. Make it fun! Figure out what motivates your dog, and use it. Training should be about play and enjoyment for both of you, and you’ll get much more valuable results that way.

2. Set yourself a goal, but don’t worry if you don’t always get there. The learning process is just as important! For me, taking time to train is about working your dog’s brain, building new skills, and (most importantly, in my opinion) building a really lovely, trusting relationship.

3. Work with your dog. If they’re not getting something, make it slightly easier and more manageable for where they’re at and work up from there. There’s no point in both of you getting more and more frustrated – just be patient and understanding and you’ll both feel better for it, learning more effectively in the long run.

4. Little and often. For most dog parents, the best training happens in small, regular sessions. This can be as short as the time it takes for the kettle to boil or your toast to pop up. Remember that training is happening all the time, so you might as well implement it in everyday life rather than setting unrealistic goals each day.

5. Don’t be afraid to call in a professional. Whether you’re a complete novice or an experienced dog parent, there will always be something new to learn. Dog trainers and behaviourists exist for a reason, so don’t ever feel like you’ve failed if you need to learn from one! We don’t bite, promise.

“There are some old-school styles of training, like making the dog fear you to respect you. You know Cesar Millan, the ‘dog whisperer’ on TV? A lot of his methods were really damaging. For a whole load of us, his name is one we don’t use! Positive training is the thing; training your dog without fear or intimidation. It’s one of the least aversive methods possible; trust-based rather than saying, ‘I am your ruler, I’m dominant and you will listen to what I say or you might get hit or poked’. We want to train because they want to, because it’s fun for them, because they’re just as valuable as we are, basically. We get called ‘cookie pushers’ in the industry because we do a lot with treats. But even aggressive dogs can be trained to be non-aggressive, without fear. And we’re proving that.’

This past January, suddenly I started getting loads of new clients – enough to pay the bills and live the lifestyle I want. But then the crisis hit, and I was like, ‘Oh god, I’ve just started smashing it. This is a fucking nightmare.’ And then I realised that a lot of the industry is moving loads of new clients – enough to pay the bills and live the lifestyle I want. But then the crisis hit, and I was like, ‘Oh god, I’ve just started smashing it. This is a fucking nightmare.’ And then I realised that a lot of the industry is moving loads of new clients – enough to pay the bills and live the lifestyle I want. But then the crisis hit, and I was like, ‘Oh god, I’ve just started smashing it. This is a fucking nightmare.’ And then I realised that a lot of the industry is moving loads of new clients – enough to pay the bills and live the lifestyle I want. But then the crisis hit, and I was like, ‘Oh god, I’ve just started smashing it. This is a fucking nightmare.’ And then I realised that a lot of the industry is moving...
I’m very into natural oils and taking care of my face and skin, so I usually spend 20 minutes having a mini gua sha facial before I head to the bench to work. That’s my favourite time of day, when I’m at the bench, where I’ll work on assembling pieces that have come back from the casting studio or carve new pieces using wax. Since the casting studio has been shut down and production has halted, I’ve been carving everyday – which is what I love most about the process, anyway!

My workout routine usually includes a warm-up, then online HIIT videos from trainers I’ve come to love in recent years, finishing with a cool-down. I also try and jog outside every other day, or – and I absolutely hate this but I will force myself to do it – run up and down the stairs in our building. It’s death. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are abs and legs/glutes days. Tuesdays and Thursdays are arms and jogging. Saturdays are also jogging days, and maybe abs. I was a competitive swimmer all through high school and I love every and all water sports. I rarely go to the gym because I actually find it quite boring, but I’d sometimes do a couple of pilates classes each month.'
‘Adapting to the lockdown has thankfully been a fairly easy transition, since my daily routine pre-quarantine already reflected a slow lifestyle.’

HOW I SPEND MY TIME:

1. Making something decorative for the house using moulding clay. I’ve been making jewelry dishes, of course.

2. Blind contour drawing, or upholstering furniture with a staple gun and recycled fabric.

3. Planting flowers or herbs – perfect timing for spring.

4. Watching a new genre of film; right now I’m enjoying French New Wave.

5. Having an at-home spa day: facial, manicure, pedicure. Even better is having someone around that’s willing to give you a 30-minute massage!

HOMEMADE GNOCCHI

I like to use red-skinned potatoes for this, but any kind works well. Serves 4-6

½ kg potatoes, skin on
200g plain (all-purpose) flour, plus extra

1. Put the potatoes in a pot and cover with water, season well with salt and bring to a boil. Cook, uncovered for about 20 minutes, or until all of the potatoes are cooked through.

2. Drain and leave to cool for no more than 2 minutes. Carefully pull off and discard the skins.

3. Mash the potatoes in a bowl and, while they’re still warm, start adding the flour, very slowly – about a ¼ cup at a time. (The less flour you use the better!) Once it comes into a malleable dough, divide it into four portions.

4. Take each portion and roll out on a floured surface into a long snake about 1½ cm thick. Cut into even, bite-size dumplings, and place spaced out on a floured surface. Press each one with the back of a fork to create little ridges. The gnocchi will keep overnight in the fridge, or frozen for up to 3 weeks (just dust well with flour first to stop them sticking together).

5. To cook, bring a pot of salted water to a boil and drop in as many gnocchi as can fit in a single layer. They only take about 1 minute to cook – as soon as they rise to the surface remove with a slotted spoon. Divide between plates and serve with your choice of sauce.

CLASSIC NEGRONI

You can vary your liquor ratios according to your preferences. Serves 1

30ml gin
30ml sweet vermouth
30ml Campari

1. Fill a mixing glass with ice and add all three spirits. Stir well until chilled. Strain into a glass over ice and garnish with an orange twist.

‘Adapting to the lockdown has thankfully been a fairly easy transition, since my daily routine pre-quarantine already reflected a slow lifestyle. I go to the farmer’s market and supermarket once a week, I’m lucky enough to work from my home studio and, excluding the casting studio which is shut down, all my other local vendors are able to deliver products to my house via courier. The most terrifying thing for me involves panic over my e-shop sales and wholesale accounts. But you can only try and stay positive and keep doing what you can do make your small business survive. I remain hopeful.’
Aaron Turner is one of Australia’s most celebrated chefs and the brains behind Igni and Hot Chicken Project. His day-to-day lockdown life is far from gentle – he’s opening Tacos y Liquor, a tiny ‘stationary taco truck’ in Geelong, which is where we caught up with him. ‘It’s the weirdest feeling in the world,’ he says. ‘The taco shop was on its way and we’d paid for a lot of things already, so we thought “Why not?” and decided to push ahead with it – let’s see if we could open a restaurant in a pandemic.’ Here, he’s shot by his neighbour @julian_kingma.

The space is on the same street that the Hot Chicken Project is on. ‘It’s a tiny corner spot that gets all the morning and afternoon light. It used to be a cocktail bar and the lady that owned it had a young family, so we bought it off her and started renovating it.’

AARON’S EMPIRE

1. IGNI
Ryan Place, Geelong
VIC, 3220.
Australia
@restaurantigni

2. Hot Chicken Project
84a Little Malop St,
Geelong VIC, 3220.
Australia
@thehotchickenproject

I’ve always made music and played in bands. I’ve got a few guitars – two Gretsch Streamliners, a Stratocaster and an LTD which is a metal guitar. I’ve also got about 600-odd records at last count. My main genre, I guess, would be the Californian punk I grew up on – I still love that. But really, I like everything from Norwegian black metal to Willie Nelson.’

RESTAURANT CHECK-IN

COCKTAIL HOUR

TUNES

PHOTOGRAPHY: Julian Kingma. ILLUSTRATIONS: Sayuri Nishikubo, Han Valentine, Grace Lee.
RECIPE TESTING

PORK BELLY TOSTADAS
Serves 4

1.5kg pork belly, skin scored
1 tablespoon salt flakes

Red salsa
2 ripe tomatoes, chopped into chunks
1 garlic clove, minced
1 long red chilli, finely chopped
½ small onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
Juice of 1 lime

To serve
8 tostadas
Tajin seasoning
1 lime, cut into quarters
30g fresh coriander
Hot sauce (optional)

1. Rub the pork with the salt and let it sit for 1 hour. Rinse and pat dry – the drier the belly, the better the crackle will be.

2. Preheat the oven to 180°C (360°F). Place the pork skin-side down in an unheated, oven-proof griddle pan. Place over a low heat, then slowly bring temperature up to high.

3. Once the pork belly is crackling and spitting nicely, transfer the griddle plan to the oven and roast for about 1 hour, or until the belly is golden and cooked through.

4. Remove the pork to a board to cool, but leave the cooking juices and fat in the griddle pan.

5. Place the pan back over a medium heat and add your tostadas to the pork juices. Toast, both sides, until golden and just starting to crisp. Set aside.

6. To make the salsa, combine all the ingredients in a small bowl and season well.

7. To serve, roughly chop or tear the pork belly and season to taste with the salt and Tajin. Squeeze over the lime juice.

8. Let everyone build their tostadas to their liking with the pork belly, salsa and freshly torn coriander. Season with a dash of your favourite hot sauce, if you like an extra kick.
Roy Werner is a composer working under the alias G.S. Sultan. With an upcoming European tour cancelled because of the pandemic, Roy is at home in LA’s Altadena neighbourhood with his photographer wife @maggiehshannon (who shot these photos). He’s coping by devoting more attention to:

### MORNING ROUTINE

We live northeast of the city in a little area called Altadena, more commonly known as Pasadena. It’s a little more suburban and very quiet. We’ve been here almost three years now.

I’ve been riding my bike a lot, mostly around the Altadena area. It’s pretty spaced out and there’s not a lot of traffic now, so it feels safe and you can just cruise around and be one with your thoughts and in your own head – without being hyper-conscious of not getting hit by a car. Getting out on the bike has helped to keep me sane.

We’ve been pretty explorative with our cooking. We haven’t really ordered in any food at all in the past month, so we’ve been pretty much exclusively cooking and getting a lot of local produce from a CSA (community-supported agriculture). We try to improvise with new techniques.

I grew up in LA in the San Fernando Valley – basically the suburbs of LA. I went to school at U.C. Davis near Sacramento and was in a new media studies department, specifically focused on sonic arts with an influence of technology. So, my bachelor’s degree is effectively in experimental composition. Then I met Maggie in New York and lived there for a while and we’ve since moved back to Los Angeles.

### MUSIC LIBRARY

@nwslimers

The minutiae of life. ‘It’s about dedicating yourself to treating something artfully instead of just utilitarian,’ he says. ‘Making dinner becomes more of an art than just something that you do for sustenance. The way we’ve been living has been more about thinking about the implication of the things we’re doing – not necessarily in a political way, but in a peace of mind way; giving things more mental headspace.’

Roy’s new album, Music For a Living Water, will be released by Orange Milk Records in June.
THE MUSIC

1. I’m really dedicated to my music, but I certainly wouldn’t say it’s my primary source of income. It’s beyond a hobby, but it’s not financially substantial.

2. Live shows play an important role. Some money comes through sales of tapes, records and physical ephemera, but less so digital downloads; the cheque is a few dollars every few months.

3. Musicians have been creative during lockdown, but I’m not sure how well they have been able to exploit it financially. Mostly I see Twitch or Instagram Live shows with a donation button at the bottom. But I’m hopeful. If this is to continue, and it seems like it will, we’ll all have to find a way to work with it.’

I work as a freelance art handler for a company that specialises in the shipment of fine art and high value objects. A lot of what I do is packing stuff for shipment, making sure that it gets across the country safely, picking up stuff from galleries and installing hanging works in private collections. It’s strange in that you get into a lot of really, really bizarre places that you would otherwise never find yourself in, like the highest wealth apartments in LA or NYC. It’s a specialised field that’s not necessarily the most difficult craft to wrap your mind around – at a base level it’s just packing stuff to make sure it doesn’t break in a box. I also sometimes work with Maggie doing photo assistant stuff.’

My music is principally digitally-based, so I don’t need too much space or equipment. Lately, though, I’ve been working a lot with piano, which has been nice. Something positive that has come out of the quarantine is that I’ve had a lot of time sitting at my piano, practising and trying new techniques. I’m definitely leaning into it as a release from whatever’s happening around me.’

DOWNTIME

‘With music during quarantine, I’ve had to almost invert the work and leisure relationship. Something that you once derived a lot of pleasure from in your leisure time becomes the only thing that you can do. You’re now spending so much time on it that you have to find a release from it!’

In quarantine our work/life balance needs a reshuffle.

PLANT CARE

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Focus on the simple things

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A DAY IN THE LIFE

7am
Fruit smoothie, coffee and a stretch – every morning.

9am
A self practice, whether that’s yoga, pilates, meditation or a workout (we luckily have a Peloton at home!).

10am
Zooming with clients.

12pm
Lunch is salads, a fresh sandwich or leftovers from dinner. I try to be as healthy as I can and limit the amount of gluten, so I’ll eat as many greens as possible.

1pm
I’ll go through my planned classes for the week. I mostly teach private clients and I need to make sure the workouts of the clients I see multiple times a week are challenging and fun.

2pm
Zooming with clients.

4pm
I’ll usually go through another stretch session or join a pilates class – I’m loving Hot Pilates and Sami Clarke’s workouts on Instagram. I’ll also go through my own live classes for that week – they’re always sweaty 30-minute sessions, so they fit in between clients perfectly. It’s important to know how a workout feels in your body before you take someone else through it. I’ll also try to do two or three 5km runs each week. On these days I’ll just have a long stretch.

6pm
Usually dinner – protein, veg and brown rice or pasta. Everyone in the house is quite healthy so it makes life easier! Depending on what day it is there will probably be a glass of wine involved. I try to limit my alcohol intake and keep it for Friday and Saturday nights.

8pm
Time to switch off!

Try to meditate when you first wake up, before coffee or food, and before the rest of the world wakes up! Start with a 10-minute meditation at first, then work your way up from there. Practice focusing on your breath – it’s a great way to train the brain to be still. Don’t worry if you don’t think you’re very good at it. No one is when they first start (trust me!). Just keep with it, and you’ll see progress.

Natalie Jameson is a yoga and pilates teacher who’s been able to continue teaching via online classes during the lockdown. ‘My job requires me to give tactile cues and hands-on assists for the client to reach their full potential,’ she says. ‘So, not being there physically has tested me.’ Keeping a healthy diet, a training program and sticking to a routine has helped her to stay sane. ‘Once this is all over, my aim is to be so healthy that I’m literally going out of here trying to make back all of the stolen time.’ Here she’s shot by local photographer @fullalove.
FEELING MOTIVATED

It’s really important (and I can’t stress this enough) to not be too hard on yourself. None of us have ever gone through something like this and no one knows what’s best for someone else.

1. **My main tip is having a routine** to get your day started and feel somewhat normal. I’ll always set an alarm, have a shower, get dressed and have my morning coffee on the balcony or in the lounge, which gets me up and running for the day. I make sure I have a lunch break and tea in the afternoon and try to stick to this.

2. **I have one day a week where I don’t put workout clothes on.** It’s simple, but putting on jeans or a nice shirt makes a difference, even if you’re only going from bedroom to lounge. I’m also grateful for the classes I teach – they’ve allowed me to create a routine, with set clients; I can plan around those times which has definitely helped keep me sane. I know a lot of people haven’t been as lucky, so I’m really thankful.

3. A **healthy diet** and a small amount of exercise each day is key. You literally only need 30 minutes a day and I try to do this outside as often as I can.

4. I also set little personal daily or weekly goals. It might be a long-term one or to try something new. Keep yourself busy but know when to switch off – it’s totally okay to relax and do nothing!

WANT TO START AN AT-HOME YOGA OR PILATES PRACTICE?

Find a quiet space big enough for you to move around in. You don’t necessarily need an expensive yoga mat or a mat at all – an empty space will be fine. You also don’t need a beautiful ‘zen’ space – as long as it’s quiet and feels good, it’s good enough for a class!

Choose a time of day that works for you – make it your ‘yoga time’ and try to stick to this. I like doing public classes on a Saturday morning, as that’s what I used to do pre-Covid.

Before you run out and buy yoga equipment, have a **look around the house first** – books for yoga blocks, tea towels for straps, pillows for meditation cushions. For pilates, though, I recommend a small soft ball which costs around £10, and resistance bands for glute exercises – it really intensifies your workout. For weights, you can use tin cans, which I use for arm workouts. Body weight can always be used and is still just as good if none of the above is possible.

Try loads of different teachers, either via Instagram, YouTube or directly through a local studio. Every teacher is so different. Support your local teachers or studios if you can!

Make sure you’re aware of any injuries you have. Some online classes might not be best for you and you need to take responsibility for your own body – unless you’re taking a private class in which case you just need to tell the teacher.

Allow yourself a 10-minute stretch before and after the class – I always find I never get a good stretch with online classes.
**WASTE NOT:** From repurposed fashion to recyclable packaging, making greener choices has never looked better. PLUS: favourites from Courier's Editor-at-Large, Tatsuo Hino.

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The botanical alchemists that we are, we’ve added hemp terpenes including myrcene, limonene and pinene. That means maximum functional benefit in each drop and some wicked flavour notes for you CBD connoisseurs to vibe over.

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**BABBETT**

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>>> P116

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CATALOG FOR THE HOME

It’s the best place to be right now, so elevate your space with functional pieces that spark joy, too – from handcrafted textiles and sustainable storage, to a reusable candle and cleaner cookware.

**BE-POLES** FROM $9

With every fold and crinkle these wax paper bags accrue character over time. A storage solution that works in any room. @be_poles

**DRIADE X FAYE TOOGOOD** €410

Avant-garde London artist Faye Toogood worked with Italian design house Driade to create this joyfully curvy Roly-Poly chair. @driade_it

**CASE STUDYO X JEAN JULLIEN** €75

Case Studyo collaborates with artists for limited-edition pieces; graphic artist Jean Jullien’s fish bowl is an understated highlight. @case_studyo

**MONTA MONTA** £22

Antioxidant hand wash made by this East London sustainable skincare brand – contains parsley seed, basil and black pepper. @montamonta

**CARAWAY** £395

Caraway’s cookware is non-toxic – free of harmful chemicals that could leach into food – and uses a mineral-based, non-stick ceramic coating. It’s also beautifully designed; this stylish cookware set includes a storage system for pans and lids, and comes in five pleasingly dusky shades. @caraway_home

**DEJA** $39

This cotton pillowcase has multiple layers that can be easily flipped, giving eight nights of clean sleep with less laundry hassle. @getdeja

**COFFEE SUPREME** $22.50

Brandish your brew affiliation with this Coffee Supreme stacker mug. Sold individually, so collect and stack at will. @coffee_supreme

**COFFEE** £38 FOR 2.5L

Makeovers made easy: durable paint in decadent shades with peel-and-stick samples. @lickhome

**BIPPY** $14 FOR 8

Bippy aims to wipe out environmental damage done by regular toilet paper – its bamboo version is soft, strong and biodegradable. @heybippy

**THE HANDWOVEN NATURE OF THESE MOROCCAN RUGS CREATES VARIATIONS IN THE PATTERNS AND COLOURS, SO EACH ONE IS UNIQUE**

**BENI RUGS** FROM $345

Beautiful rugs made to order in the Atlas Mountains, from 100% natural wool. This Angles design combines contemporary lines with desert-inspired hues. @beni_rugs

**ESPELMA** £110

Each unique, hand-blown Murano glass jar holds a refillable scentless candle. @espelmacandles

**GRL AND CO.** $45

Hailing from Queens, New York, design studio Grl&Co make artworks with simple typographic statements that champion equality and representation. This hand-sewn cotton/muslin banner, with hand-cut felt letters, brings a pop of positivity to any wall. The vibes that we all need right now. @grland.co

**BENI RUGS** FRM $345

Beautiful rugs made to order in the Atlas Mountains, from 100% natural wool. This Angles design combines contemporary lines with desert-inspired hues. @beni_rugs

**CASE STUDYO X JEAN JULLIEN** €75

Case Studyo collaborates with artists for limited-edition pieces; graphic artist Jean Jullien’s fish bowl is an understated highlight. @case_studyo

**MONTA MONTA** £22

Antioxidant hand wash made by this East London sustainable skincare brand – contains parsley seed, basil and black pepper. @montamonta

**CARAWAY** £395

Caraway’s cookware is non-toxic – free of harmful chemicals that could leach into food – and uses a mineral-based, non-stick ceramic coating. It’s also beautifully designed; this stylish cookware set includes a storage system for pans and lids, and comes in five pleasingly dusky shades. @caraway_home

**DEJA** $39

This cotton pillowcase has multiple layers that can be easily flipped, giving eight nights of clean sleep with less laundry hassle. @getdeja

**COFFEE SUPREME** $22.50

Brandish your brew affiliation with this Coffee Supreme stacker mug. Sold individually, so collect and stack at will. @coffee_supreme

**COFFEE** £38 FOR 2.5L

Makeovers made easy: durable paint in decadent shades with peel-and-stick samples. @lickhome

**BIPPY** $14 FOR 8

Bippy aims to wipe out environmental damage done by regular toilet paper – its bamboo version is soft, strong and biodegradable. @heybippy

**THE HANDWOVEN NATURE OF THESE MOROCCAN RUGS CREATES VARIATIONS IN THE PATTERNS AND COLOURS, SO EACH ONE IS UNIQUE**

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**EAT + DRINK**

Nourishment for mind and body, from coffee fix to cocktail hour: keto treats and cannabis sweets; spirits with or without the booze; the ultimate iced tea; and cookbooks to revolutionise your routine.

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**FOEKJES FLEURES**  
€16.90

Plastic bottle refills are all well and good, but Bubble Buddy goes the extra mile. The soap dish is made from recycled plastic waste, keeps bar soap dry, and the grater in the lid lets you flake the soap into suds for dishes and laundry. Better for the planet, and more satisfying to use than liquid soap. @foekje_fleur

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**ELLA HOOKWAY**  
£65

London artist Ella Hookway creates clean, functional ceramics, like this face vase. Painted by hand, each piece is one of a kind. @ellahookway

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**THE SILL**  
$22

Creating an indoor Eden is easy with The Sill’s plants and garden supplies such as this handy organic Potting Mix and Lava Rocks kit. @thesill

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**PRIMARY GOODS**  
$299

Primary’s temp-controlled comforter is made from all-natural materials and promises to keep you cozy all night, every night. @primary

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**DÉSIRÉE MALESSA NEST**  
$T BC

A response to nomadic modern living, NEST (Nomadic Essentials for Simpler Transitions) is a furniture set that makes moving easier for urbanites. This bed, desk and shelf can be packed up into one easily transportable crate. Planned for release once the manufacturer is confirmed: watch this space. @malessa.studio

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**STBC**

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**FLOCK**  
$3 per bag

Crispy chicken skin is transformed into this high-protein, keto-friendly snack – all the crunch of a potato crisp without the carbs. @flock.foods

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**WOKEN**  
£6.75 (10 capsules)

Woken’s mission is to wake people up with compostable espresso pods. Its medium-bodied Arabica roast should help. @wokencoffee

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**VINA**  
£2.79 each

While those in the know have long embraced the benefits of apple cider vinegar – believed to aid digestion and improve gut health – Vina’s sparkling versions are here to make it more palatable. Made with fresh fruit and zero artificial sweeteners, flavours include orange turmeric and cherry rooibos. @vinaacv

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**EIGHTY DEGREES MAGAZINE**  
£15

The history of tea is rich and storied, inspiring this UK magazine, infused with the rituals and everyday joys. Issue three out now. @eighty

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**TRUE GUM**  
£14 for six

All natural and vegan, this greener chewing gum from Copenhagen is available in fresh flavours such as mint and ginger-turmeric. @truegum

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**CALENO**  
£24.99

Bottling a tropical infusion of juniper, citrus and spice botanicals brings all-important zest and zing to this non-alcoholic spirit. @calenodrinks

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**MICROPLASTICS**

**USED IN REGULAR GUM STICK AROUND FOREVER – TRUE GUM USES CHICLE, A TREE SAP WHICH IS FULLY BIODEGRADABLE**

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**FLAT MOVING MADE EASY**

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MAEVT $24
Maev’s raw, nutrient-dense dog foods are available on subscription and include this tasty and immunity-boosting bone broth, #meetmeev

GNISTA €21
This Swedish non-alcoholic spirit serves up an intense yet balanced blend of wormwood, green herbs and citrus peels. #gnistaspirits

UNA LOU ROSÉ $40 FOR A BOX OF 4
Summer beckons with this canned rosé from Andrew Mariani, co-owner of northern California’s Scribe winery, and his wife Lia. Named for their daughter, Una Lou is a celebration, with notes of white peach, jasmine, and wild strawberry. Chill a four-pack for that first post-lockdown picnic. #unalourose

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ROSE FROM $22
A more refined take on cannabis-infused treats, these seasonally flavoured turkish delight edibles offer a sweet high. #rose_losangeles

ROSE EDIBLES ARE MADE WITH FRESH FRUIT AND ROSIN, PRESSED FROM WHOLE, SINGLE-STRAIN CANNABIS BUDS

MARK T WENDELL $18 PER 8OZ
The brand’s signature black tea has a delicate, smoky flavour. Follow the steps on the tin to get the best from each infusion. #marktwendelletea

TONKOTSU £6.95
Japanese chilli oil from a beloved UK ramen restaurant; the umami flavour gets an extra kick from fermented scotch bonnets. tonkotsu.co.uk

KOLLO $39 (CASE OF 6)
Kollo’s luxury cold-brew iced tea is made in Los Angeles from organic, single-source tea leaves, free of preservatives and flavourings. #kollo
BEAUTY + SELF

Simplify skincare and unwind the mind with bespoke facial serums, body-healing soaks and lotions, kinder menstrual care, a comb to last the distance, and oils applied inside and out for much needed calm.

EVERY PURCHASE FROM HAOMA DIRECTLY PLANTS A TREE THROUGH ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH TREES.ORG

BIRTHDATE CANDLES $38

Know thyself in style: every date has its own candle with a unique personalised scent, character profile, and more. #birthdodecandles

ANATOMÉ $35

Apply this blend of oils and Japanese seaweed to the temples before bed – natural sedative properties promote a deeper sleep. #anatomelondon

FORGO £38 FOR THE STARTER KIT

Named for the very notion ‘to do without’, Forgo’s mission is to reduce waste and live more sustainably. They’ve created a sustainable hand wash, delivered in recyclable sachets of powder which, when added to water in their reusable glass bottle, transforms into a foaming liquid soap. #forgoessentials

HAOMA $100

Slather skin with this body cream from Haoma’s Cannabidiol Collection – fig, red mandarin, cocoa seed, plus a boost of sativa CBD. #haoma.earth

TREATY $129

A therapeutic oral formula to support the body after exertion. Aromatic extracts instantly invigorate while CBD eases inflammation. #treaty

BOIE BODY SCRUBBER $10

Buff skin with this durable, self-cleaning body scrubber made from antimicrobial, thermoplastic rubber in a range of colours. #boieusa

3RD RITUAL $32

A sumptuous body lotion from this US collective, with essential oils, activated charcoal, and moonstone extract for groundedness. #3rdritual

ONE THING FROM £4

South Korean skincare is renowned for pushing the boundaries, yet this brand strips things right back. As per the name each One Thing facial treatment features a single ingredient – a pure, high-grade plant extract – for a specific intention, from calming troubled skin to boosting hydration. #onething_official

PRIMA $45

Made in California, these CBD supplements boost focus and ease stress, for better balance. #prima

CROWN AFFAIR $36

Keep hair tangle-free and give the scalp a nourishing massage with this wide-tooth comb. Hand-carved in Switzerland from robust, plant-based acetate, it’s made to last. #crownaffair
**CATALOG**

**EVENS**
FROM $3

Keep heartburn at bay with Evens’ antacid remedies—they’re FDA-approved and available on a regular subscription, as needed. @evens

**ATTOLA**
FROM $35

Through thorough but simple at-home analysis, Atolla creates a personalised facial serum to tackle individual skin needs. @atollaskinlab

**BILLIE**
FROM $9

Billie’s shaving subscription delivers razors on the regular, while the slick handle comes in dynamic colours (even glow-in-the-dark). @billie

**YONI CHAMPIONS**

**ORGANIC COTTON**
IT’S FREE OF TOXIC PESTICIDES, USES 91% LESS WATER TO GROW, AND CREATES BETTER CONDITIONS FOR FARMERS

**YONI**
FROM €3.99

Dutch brand Yoni has a valuable mission: to make periods ‘free of plastic, chemicals, and shame’. Their tampons, pads and pantyliners are made from 100% organic cotton, making them fully biodegradable—but just as importantly they’re comfortable, breathable, and provide total protection. @yoni.care

**SESSION SKIN**
£17

A cult primer designed to combat the impurities that burden pores during exercise, while giving complexions a smooth, soft-filter finish. @session

**AYOND**

$110

Ayond takes tips from the desert for remedies that protect skin from environmental stressors; the Taos Blue day cream uses antioxidant-rich prickly pear, rock rose, and aloe. @ayond

**ARCANA**

£72 (MIST), £75 (OIL)

Ecology and skincare unite in this range of high-quality, plant-lead skincare. Ingredients are harvested via biodynamic farming or from the wilds of the brand’s native Scotland, for serums, oils and sprays which hydrate and regenerate skin at a cellular level. @arcana_skin

**WOODBEN SPOON HERBS**

$36 EACH

Plant-based remedies for everyday wellness, inspired by the company founder’s Appalachian roots. These tinctures help to enhance mood and restore balance. @woodenspoonherbs

**HENRY WILSON STUDIO**

£102

This elegant oil burner doubles as an ‘objet d’art’. Designed by Studio Henry Wilson for Australian skincare brand Aesop, it’s crafted entirely from solid brass. @studiohenrywilson

**THE WAX APPLE MASSAGER**

FROM $25

LA-based curator Juliana Hong regularly joins her grandmother in Taiwan to hunt for unique, well-crafted products. These massage tools, made from robust sandalwood or animal horn, not only roll away knots and worries but look beautiful in the home. @the_wax_apple

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**CATALOG**

**WEAR + CARRY**

Keep it comfortable with terry towel attire and cotton-heavy outerwear, New York hoodies and tees that empower, bold print shirts to stand out in, zero-waste bags from Mexico, and the lavender jumpsuit of dreams.

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**OAS**

Swedish resort brand OAS’s terracotta terry towel Cuba shirt is the top choice after a dip in the pool or splash in the sea. @oascompany

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**ISTO**

Lisbon-based luxury brand ISTO leaves nothing behind – its Japanese denim tote bag is made with excess fabric or unsold stock. @istotc

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**OFFHOURS X GOSSAMER**

Styling itself as ‘inactive-wear for being indoors’, this Offhours collaboration with cannabis culture magazine Gossamer couldn’t be more fitting. Their green unisex Dogwalker housecoat is a layer of soft, quality cottons that keep things warm but light. The cozy embrace a late-night walk demands. @offhours.co

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**TELFAR**

Stay warm in style with this ribbed-knit ski mask – a clever use of mesh shapes the opening in the New York brand’s T-shaped logo. @tefarglobal

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**ASHYA**

Pronounced ‘agh-shya’, this New York design label brings utility and luxury to its unisex travel accessories. Their Cedar Valley Multi-Green Viper belt bag is high-end style in the crocodile-printed cow leather and gold-plating, while the handy removable pockets speaks to thoughtful functionality. @ashya.co

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**BOLD DOTS**

Bold Dots’ slick eyewear was founded by designer Akshar H Patel who aims to bring a touch of design elements from his Indian heritage to his handmade, high-quality frames. The Madison elevates the classic round-frame look with subtle speckles of colour and just the right amount of edge. @boulddots

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**JAKHU**

From this London-based studio come these silver Muyu earrings, handcrafted in Peru using traditional techniques. @jakhu_studio

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**PYER MOSS**

Stand out in this bold yellow cropped cotton-blend puffer – the bungee drawcords and flap pockets keep the look tucked in. @pyermoss

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**MAYBE TODAY NYC**

This Spring Rose heavy cotton hoodie speaks to the Brooklyn label’s ethos, to support and inspire artists and entrepreneurs. @maybetodaynyc

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**MANUAL PHOTO**

Revel in the analogue with this Smile T-shirt, emblazoned with the New York film photography company’s pithy call to action. @manual_nyc

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ON MY WATCH

COURIER’S EDITOR-AT-LARGE
TATSUO HINO ROUNDS UP
PRODUCTS THAT HAVE
CAUGHT HIS EYE

E.L.V. £350
The Amsterdam fashion and lifestyle brand’s keychain bag delivers extra storage and a welcome pop of colour on any belt loop. @dailypaper

HUMAN BY NATURE $718
Nostalgia meets new, and American concepts merge with themes from designer John Lehmán’s Asian upbringing. HBN encapsulates the best of both worlds – case in point, this Tokyo Athletic Club Blue WW2 Camo Jersey, the classic football shirt given a contemporary street-style twist. @humanbynaturehbn

INFINITY PILLOW £39.99
A compact, versatile travel pillow from Amsterdam studio BCXSY that unfurls into all manner of supportive iterations. @infinitypillow

MR WOOD £120
Each shirt from this London designer is a numbered limited edition – their flamingo print (one of only 84) is the pick for summer. @mrwoodlondon

JUNES $14 FOR 3
This zero-waste carry-all is made by a women’s sewing co-operative in Mexico and can be used for just about anything. @junesbags

MAGGIE MARILYN $291
This sustainable luxury brand blends feminine and masculine with their Bite The Bullet Jumpsuit in organic cotton denim. @maggiemarilyn

L’ENCHANTEUR $150
This Velvet Brimless Wpe Cap hails from a Brooklyn design house that looks to science and magic for unique inspiration. @l_enchanteur

BABETT
“Hailing from Copenhagen, BABETT creates handmade, one-of-a-kind attire, mostly made from vintage fabrics which have their own stories from the past, but are repurposed to live in the now.” @babett_shop

MALLE £139
Vintage motorcycle enthusiasts create gear for travelling in style, and their unisex merino jumper is both classic and utilitarian. @mallelondon

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+ ZUCCA X OUTDOOR PRODUCTS DAY PACK
Zucca champions understated aesthetics in this collaboration with Outdoor Products. Their day bag is very light with a unique colour and matte texture, and uses Konbu water repellent nylon, so it can be thrown into laundry machine – it’s so easy to care for.” @zucca_official

+ MARVIN
“This new LA style brand will make its debut in June with a punk rock messianic vision for the future by the founder and visionary of Marvin Jarette Scott, who founded RayGun Magazine and Nylon Magazine. The brand to watch out for.” @marvinjarette

+ COLETTE MON AMOUR FILM
“An hour-long documentary film on what went on behind the most iconic Parisian powerhouse, Colette. I’m not sure what their screening plans are, but it is an amazing, very emotional film loaded with personal anecdotes and human-touch stories.” @colette_mon_amour

+ CATHRI
“A relaxed, nostalgic collaborative brand with Japanese lifestyle company BEAMS, and Kurume Kasuri [an indigo cotton textile] which has been used more than 200 years – the technique is acknowledged as an important and intangible Japanese cultural asset. Cathri will be a perfect companion for high summer.” @cathri_official

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“An hour-long documentary film on what went on behind the most iconic Parisian powerhouse, Colette. I’m not sure what their screening plans are, but it is an amazing, very emotional film loaded with personal anecdotes and human-touch stories.” @colette_mon_amour

+ CATHRI
“A relaxed, nostalgic collaborative brand with Japanese lifestyle company BEAMS, and Kurume Kasuri [an indigo cotton textile] which has been used more than 200 years – the technique is acknowledged as an important and intangible Japanese cultural asset. Cathri will be a perfect companion for high summer.” @cathri_official

+ BABETT
“Hailing from Copenhagen, BABETT creates handmade, one-of-a-kind attire, mostly made from vintage fabrics which have their own stories from the past, but are repurposed to live in the now.” @babett_shop

+ ZUCCA X OUTDOOR PRODUCTS DAY PACK
Zucca champions understated aesthetics in this collaboration with Outdoor Products. Their day bag is very light with a unique colour and matte texture, and uses Konbu water repellent nylon, so it can be thrown into laundry machine – it’s so easy to care for.” @zuca
FOR FUN

Ways to keep boredom at bay – pick up knitting, get into gardening, screen-free fun for the kids, and a history lesson in jigsaw form.

CATALOG

UNCOMMON GOODS SHOWCASES PRODUCTS FROM SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES AND INDEPENDENT CREATORS

Dave Buonaguidi

Bold new pieces from East-London artist Dave Buonaguidi feature screen printed statements on one-off vintage maps of the solar system - all finished off with a flourish of glow-in-the-dark ink. Available exclusively from printclublondon.com #printclublondon

Wool and the Gang

Time to learn a new skill – Wool and The Gang’s knitting beginner kit has all the tools and tips needed to make your own blanket. Plus live workshops on its Instagram. #woolandthegang

Click and Grow

Smart gardens that take care of all the watering, light and nutrients, so even garden neophytes can find joy in growing. @clickandgrow

Uncommon Goods

This site creates a jigsaw puzzle of any New York Times front page since 1851 – a clever gift to commemorate a special date. @uncommongoods

The Gardens of Eden

A book that celebrates urban green spaces and imaginative residential gardens. @gestalten

Yoto

Kids can access stories and music through loaded slot cards in this innovative screen-free entertainment system, by London tech start-up Yoto and Pentagram design. @yotoplay

The Gardens of Eden

€39.90

This book celebrates urban green spaces and imaginative residential gardens.

Uncommon Goods

£40.49

This site creates a jigsaw puzzle of any New York Times front page since 1851 – a clever gift to commemorate a special date.

Yoto

£79.99

Kids can access stories and music through loaded slot cards in this innovative screen-free entertainment system.

Dave Buonaguidi

£360

Bold new pieces from East-London artist Dave Buonaguidi feature screen printed statements on one-off vintage maps of the solar system - all finished off with a flourish of glow-in-the-dark ink.

Wool and the Gang

£58

Time to learn a new skill – Wool and The Gang’s knitting beginner kit has all the tools and tips needed to make your own blanket. Plus live workshops on its Instagram.

Click and Grow

From €99.95

Smart gardens that take care of all the watering, light and nutrients, so even garden neophytes can find joy in growing.

A Day’s March