How the Pandemic Got Me to Shift My Priorities

August 21, 2021 6 min read

Opinions expressed by *Entrepreneur* contributors are their own.

My career first began at the age of 14 when I started a side business focused on printing and graphic design. From a young age, I loved the hustle of working and seeing what I could do to grow in my craft. Now, I run my own shop and graphic design business all these years later.

Professional experience and hustle will carry a person pretty far, but in 2020 we faced circumstances that no one was prepared for. Something changed for me when Covid-19 first arrived. I realized that the pandemic was influencing business in a big way. Pushing aside fear for my own business, I decided to look at the outbreak as an opportunity to improve myself. With so many people struggling, I knew that I needed to work harder and really push past my limits.

Enter Covid-19

I still remember that week in March of 2020 as if it were yesterday. It was a Sunday in March when a bartender handed me my drink and said, “Enjoy it, my brother, we are going into a lockdown starting tomorrow.” Initially, I didn’t worry much, but that changed when I started paying attention to the media.

The following day, my worry began to settle in. I remember my brother-in-law coming home from work feeling ill. He decided to take a Covid-19 test and quarantine himself to be safe. The

next day, we got the news that he had, in fact, tested positive for the virus. At that moment, it all felt too real.

Trying to keep everything under control drained me mentally. Regardless, I had to find a way to turn that fear into strength. The coverage of deaths and devastation tore through neighborhoods and families, reaching us only through the news and social media.

Out of nowhere, my sister started to feel sick. I was left with no choice but to take care of her, and it wasn't long before I started feeling ill. I felt like I was in the twilight zone mentally. Physically, the body aches were unbearable. I suffered from shortness of breath, loss of taste and smell with no type of appetite. This ordeal lasted an excruciating two weeks.

Related: **Covid-19 Will Fuel the Next Wave of Innovation**

Humility and spiritual beliefs over income

When it came to generating income for my business, I wasn't too worried. Luckily, I had some savings that I could live on for a decent amount of time. I remember speaking to some business owners who were in complete distress and unsure what to do. It was a time where income suddenly seemed to stop for many entrepreneurs – and people were scared.

The opportunities for new forms of income started presenting themselves to me almost immediately. Items like masks and marketing materials for restaurants and businesses were in high demand. However, I was very reluctant to make any profit from essential items like masks and so on. Owning a branding company, I had all the equipment that could have created all of those in-demand products and services. Still, I didn't care much for it. Instead, I focused on building a stronger

relationship with my family and God. Company founders thrive every day when they focus on support from their families, and I was so grateful for mine.

After my scare, my priorities shifted in a big way.

I've always been a very spiritual person, but now more than ever, I was ready to live my change and become the person I wanted to be. I started by offering my services to individuals I felt could use them completely free of charge. In my heart, it didn't matter that I wasn't in the best financial position to be doing this. What mattered and kept me going was that sense of happiness I brought to some individuals.

Getting back to business

In June of 2020, I returned to my warehouse and found it riddled with dust and machines deprived of ink and cleaning solutions. Getting a technician out to service them was impossible because of the pandemic. I didn't know what to do.

That is when I got a call from one of the owners of a popular restaurant in New York asking if I knew someone that could build them an outdoor dining space for their restaurant. This was something new the city was offering to help struggling restaurants as a way to make up for the inability to dine inside.

I took a second to think and then very confidently told him that I could handle that for him. I know that as an entrepreneur, being open to taking a big leap is how you turn opportunity into success. It was definitely a challenge, but I jumped in without hesitation. As a result, I was able to find innovative ways to build structures around the city and use it as a substitute for the lost revenue from my main business.

Over the past seven months, I have been able to apply that passion and love to everything that I do, and I have been able

to leap over hurdles that I wasn't able to before. I was even inspired to create a philanthropic company, Hustle With God, a platform designed to push all boundaries and try to make the world a better place one day at a time.

Related: 9 Ways Covid-19 Is Like Running a Marathon

What I learned

Covid-19 came with a long list of lessons. During this time, it became clear that I needed to be there for others. We all owe each other a hand when we can, and I take that a lot more seriously now.

Businesses are not a guarantee. I might have been able to hustle and overcome certain challenges, but not everyone did. This was my reality check. My business isn't a guarantee, no matter how hard I fight for it. It is important to be prepared and willing to adapt. Having a backup plan is key, especially when you have a lot on the line. There are no guarantees in life, and that includes our health and safety.

Related: How Your Small Business Can Survive The Covid-19 Pandemic

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/378201