

Verizon

How to create the ideal customer experience in the new normal

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The statements and opinions by Peter Shankman do not reflect the views or opinions of Verizon and its affiliates.

PRESENTATION

Chris Serico

Hi, I'm Chris Serico from Verizon. Welcome to our Small Business Webinar Series. Thanks for being here today.

Now, with all of our webinars, we aim to bring you the latest insights on finding success for your small business by hosting industry experts with innovative and inspiring ideas. Our guest today is Peter Shankman. He's an entrepreneur, best-selling author, and the host of the number one podcast on ADHD, Faster than Normal. He's helped businesses around the world radically improve their customer service, embrace neurodiversity, and see the upsides of ADHD. He's here today to share how your small business can create the ideal customer service experience amidst the changes we're all facing.

Our host today is Ramon Ray. I'm glad he's back with us again. He's awesome. And if you aren't familiar with Ramon from our series already, he's an entrepreneur, an author, a speaker, and the founder of SmartHustle Media. Welcome back, Ramon.

So let's get started. Here now are Peter Shankman and Ramon Ray. Take it away, gentlemen.

Ramon Ray

Chris, thank you so much for that introduction. It's always good to be back here at the Verizon Small Business Webinar Series. Great to be here with someone who I followed, observed, watched, looked up to for many, many years, as Chris has already said, Peter Shankman, and Peter, once again, thanks for joining us, and thank you for your time today in helping us at the Verizon Small Business Webinar Series. Appreciate it.

Peter Shankman

My pleasure. Good to be here, Ramon.

Ramon Ray

Awesome. So Peter, let's jump into one thing I know is very important to you, and we're going to touch on a few key points, but one thing I want right at the top, one thing, it's a passion for you and you talk about quite a bit, is ADHD and related. Can you start right at the top? What is it? Why is it so important to you, and what is it that we need to know about it and maybe speak to those who have it, and those who don't? Feel free to spend some time on that.

Peter Shankman

Yes, I mean, one of the key things to understand is that in this world that we're in now where everything is so condensed, so sent down to the most binary detail, we really live in an attention span world of about 2.7 to three seconds, and at that level, it is very hard to focus on everything, let alone anything. I was diagnosed with ADHD about 10 years ago, which is attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

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When I was growing up in the New York City public schools in the 70s and 80s, it was called sit down, you're disrupting the class, and could never figure out why, and then over time, I realized that my brain works a lot faster than other people, and I've since written about this, and the concept of Faster Than Normal affects probably 25 to 35% of the population in the United States alone, and the 25 to 35% of people who you're selling to, who you're buying from, who you're hiring, who have a faster brain, who think a little differently, who have to do other things to get those same chemicals, those focus chemicals, those dopamine, that serotonin, that adrenaline that regular people create on their own, and so people like us have put together rules and rituals to allow us to use our neurodiverse brains for good. And I can get on a plane, which is like my happy place, and write a book, and on a round trip, like Tokyo, which I've done several times, and I'm completely and totally focused. So for me, it's very important to get those chemicals the best way I can, whether it's exercise or whatever, and just be aware that more and more people are coming forward with sort of... it's something we didn't talk about in the 70s because we didn't know about it, but now it's very popular and people understand it and say, hey, it's not necessarily a disability. It's a great advantage if you know how to use it.

Ramon Ray

Yes, and that's a powerful thing. I just want to underline that for those listening, maybe the parents listening and struggling a bit, I think it's interesting what you said, Peter, and I think now the world is more awake and aware, but many times in the past, as you've already said, 10 years, 20 years, whatever it could be, oh, it's a disability, stick this kid in the closet. I don't know why it is, maybe just as a final question on this, Peter, it seems like so many of the successful people in the world have some form of ADHD, all the [inaudible] many others. So that's ironic that this is an asset.

Peter Shankman

It's very true. The reason they do is because when you have ADHD, you learn at a very early age that your brain is different and you embrace that, and so thinking differently for someone like me or someone else with ADHD, Dave Neeleman of JetBlue, Keith Krach, who founded DocuSign, Joe de Sena, who started the Spartan Race. All these people have this different brain and they've embraced that difference, and they say you know what, I have this crazy idea, and I'm going to start it and I'm going to see what happens, because what's the worst that can happen? Way too many great ideas are lying dead on the side of the road because people didn't have the guts to say, well, it's different, let's see what happens, and when you're ADHD, you're like, well, let's see what happens, hey, it's great, and you get lucky sometimes.

Ramon Ray

Yes, no, for sure. Thank you for that, Peter. So one thing I know... the second thing I want to talk about is these rules of the economy, and I'm curious, Peter, as you go through all, if we have time, five, maybe bullet point them out, is this something that was like a post-COVID, now that we're all shelter in place, we have to pay attention to, or is this something, Peter, that's good today, was good five years ago, and we just keep doing as we hear these? I'm curious of the context as you share these rules of the economy.

Peter Shankman

So it's not so much post-COVID, although that helps. So here's the basic premise. The customer experience, in any capacity over the past 50 years, has gone from relatively OK to pretty much horrible. If you think about the last time you were on plane, think of the last time you had a customer interaction, it probably wasn't great. People are getting shot right now because they're not wearing masks, or because they refuse to wear a mask, it's a crazy time out there, and so, people expect the bar for any customer interaction or customer experience to be unbelievably low to begin with. If that's where the bar is, as a small business owner, you have a tremendous opportunity, in that I don't need you to be great. I don't even need you to be good. I just need you to be a little less worse than your competitors, and that sounds funny and it sounds crazy, but let's face it, that's pretty much where we are.

[all talking]

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It is sad, but it's a phenomenal win for people like us who run small businesses. If my expectation of taking a flight is that I'm going to have to spend three hours going through TSA and I'm going to get pulled over for the body cavity search, and by the time I get to my flight, they'd have given away my first class seat and I'm sitting next to the bathroom in the back. If I just have a normal experience, which is that I get on the plane, everything's fine, we take off on time and land on time, I'm going to consider that the greatest flight ever because of where my expectations were. So when your expectations are so incredibly low, as a customer, then the experience doesn't need to be amazing. I always tell the joke about the two guys who are running in the woods, they're on a trail run, and they see a bear and they say, oh my goodness, it's a bear, what are we going to do? And then the first guy tightens his running shoes, the second guy goes, what are you doing? You can't outrun a bear. And the first guy says, no, I just need to outrun you. But it's very, very true. I don't need you to be phenomenal. I don't need you to walk on fire. I don't need you to spend millions of dollars on customer experience or customer service. I need you to smile. I need you to smile, I need you to show empathy, especially in a post-COVID world when no one knows what the heck is going on, on any given day. The easiest thing in the world is to show empathy and say, hey, we are all in this together, how can I help you?

Ramon Ray

I think that's powerful. I'm curious, Peter, I want to push back a bit, I can hear the Verizon Small Business webinar people listening and scrambling and screaming at Peter right now, it seems, Peter, I say this half tongue in cheek, that this is something only large businesses can attain. They have the funds, the resources, they can do all the fancy training, they can spend the famous, what is it, the Ritz Carlton example, spend a few thousand dollars. Can smaller businesses do that, Peter?

Peter Shankman

It's entirely inaccurate it's only for big business. Here's why. Small businesses, if you are a person who owns, let's say, a business where you employ 10 people, 20 people, 30 people, chances are you're the one hiring them. If you're the one hiring them, you have to become a better hirer. Hire people who understand people. Hire people who have empathy. You can teach anyone how to make hospital corners on a hotel bedroom, you can teach anyone how to sweep a floor, you can teach anyone how to make a pasta dish. You can't teach empathy. They're people who love people, and if you hire people who have empathy already, they will do everything you want and the nice thing about that is that that winds up bringing you... you get the customers you want by being amazing to the customers you have, and when that amazing bar is so low, it doesn't have to be that amazing.

I talk about the M&Ms experience. I've shared this in the past. Every time I get on a flight and before lockdown and before this whole nightmare, I used to travel about a quarter million miles a year, and I would not get on a plane without a two pound bag of M&Ms. It didn't matter if I was flying to Boston or Bangkok, I was bringing a two pound bag of M&Ms on every flight. I walk on the plane, I give it to the lead flight attendant, and I say, hey, this is for you, enjoy the flight, you've got to share it with your coworkers, and the... you could watch the five stages of M&Ms disbelief, right? What is it? Because if I asked the lead flight attendant, the first thing they think is, oh god, he wants to speak to the manager type thing, right?

Ramon Ray

What did I do wrong? How did I screw up?

Peter Shankman

Exactly. So I'm, like, hi, you're the lead? OK, this is for you, you have to share it with your coworkers, have a good day, and I walk to my seat. I turn around and they're just like, chocolate! And they're amazed. So what happens is they wind up bringing that chocolate to all their coworkers. Now everyone else is boarding the flight and they're boarding the flight from a happier place. They're very happy, everyone's cheerful, everyone's happy. What did it cost me? It cost me 10 bucks to elevate the flight experience for 300 people. If that's

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all it takes, because now the flight attendants are smiling and they're smiling at the people when they board the plane, everyone's happy. If that's all it takes, what can you do for your business that costs 10 bucks or even less?

Ramon Ray

You're right, that's powerful, and I'm curious, Peter, what are your thoughts then how... as you said, this works for smaller businesses. We hire the right person. Can you help us judge the aspect between I'm dealing with inventory, taxes, COVID, my personal life and all this, and yet, Peter, you're saying to hire the person, which is part of it, but also how do we... I guess, the common thing is that the owner cares most is what I'm trying to say. The owner cares most about their business. What are some things that you've seen, tips, people you advise with how to keep extending that and reminding your team, hey, listen, let's keep at it, let's smile at the very least?

Peter Shankman

It has to come from top down. There's no question about it. If you run a business and you're miserable, and all you care about is the dollar and you're not pushing for customer experience, your employees aren't going to follow you. They're going to try to be empathetic and try to do the right thing, but when they see that they're not getting any support from management, they're going to go away and they're eventually going to leave and find a company that does work. The greatest thing in the world is to find... is to treat your employees so well that they don't want to leave, and so being able to focus on your employees, having their back, when you get that customer, the customer is not always right. Let's understand that. The customer is right a lot of the time, but sometimes the customer's just an idiot, and at that point, you have to back your employees. And I will never forget, I was running a PR firm 20 years ago, and one of my employees was being harassed by one of the clients, and we all went to dinner and he was just da-da-da-da, and by the time it was over, before it even ended, I said I just want to let you know, this is the last meal we're having. I'm resigning this account in the morning. He's like, well, you're giving away all that money, you wouldn't do that. I'm like actually I would. You've been nothing but horrible to my employees, and that's not how I run a business, and it was liberating, but that employee to this day, if I had a project, I could hire her in 30 seconds. It doesn't take much. It just takes being a little better and having the back of your employees.

Ramon Ray

And just to give you an opportunity to even pack this... because I think it's so powerful to underline. We've all heard so many times, incorrectly, Peter, that the customer's always right, the customer's always right. To have great customer service, they're always right. They spit in your face, they did something wrong, smile and keep grinning and bearing it. What I'm hearing you saying – you've already said it, but I want to repeat it. You're saying don't do that. It's your employees, your team who you may put a little higher if they're in the right and the customer's... is that what I'm hearing, Peter?

Peter Shankman

Yes. Now that being said, if you screw up or the employee screws up, by all means, fix it, make the customer number one and make them happy, but don't do it at the expense of the employee. I tell every employee who ever works to me that they will never get fired if they make a mistake. They'll get fired if I teach them the right way to do it, and they say they got it and they don't have it, but you never get fired for trying something new or failing after making a mistake. That's how we learn.

Ramon Ray

Yes. Peter, this is a great conversation. We have a few more minutes to go and I want to remind people use the question, the Q&A tab, ask questions to Peter Shankman, and Peter's website is petershankman.com.

Peter Shankman

Just shankman.com, even better.

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Shankman.com, the best place to go to see him. He has so many things to offer, mastermind groups, books, all kinds of things you want to check out, and I recommend – Peter didn't ask me to say this – I'm on his email list, you definitely want to get on that list as well, and second thing I want to say, Peter, for those asking, we've done this many times, how can I get the replay? Can I get the replay? Yes, you can. Just go to the same BrightTALK link, download this and check out the other things we've been doing in the Verizon Small Business Webinar Series, and those who want to find out about Ramon, ramonray.com.

Peter, let's move on. This has been great about customer experience, customer service, and I hope people are asking, in fact, they are, Peter, many questions. Speed is very important. You hinted on this at the beginning of our conversation. Let's touch on that one more time. For the smaller businesses out there, why is speed important? How do we do it? Maybe first, Peter, what does it mean?

Peter Shankman

So we are being bombarded with information. Back in the 50s we had approximately a five minute attention span when it came to learning something new. If we saw an advertisement – advertisements in the 50s were usually a minute long, if not a minute 30, if not two minutes. Can you imagine sitting through a two-minute advertisement now when you're trying to watch something on Netflix, you'll go crazy. In the 80s that dropped to about 30 seconds, 45 seconds for an ad, and actually MTV coined the term the three-minute attention span because a video was roughly... a music video was roughly three minutes. Currently today, it's about 2.7 seconds. You have roughly 2.7 seconds to reach your audience for the first time before they go somewhere else. That's roughly 140 characters. Not a tweet, but rather a mobile message, a couple of sentences. So if you only have that much time, that limited amount of time, what can you do, and it really comes down to something a professor of mine said at Boston University 20 something years ago, which was brilliant at the basics.

Ramon Ray

Wow.

Peter Shankman

Right? If all you have is 2.7 seconds, for God's sake, learn to spell, become a better communicator in whatever form you're communicating. If you speak publicly, take an improv class, take some sort of class that allows you to... take an acting class. If you are writing, take a writing class or reading comprehension class. If you only have 2.7 seconds to reach me and the first thing I notice is a spelling error, we're going to have a problem. I always tell the story of my daughter, a wonderful girl who is seven years old. Her name is Jessa. When she was about a year old, I brought her to a place in New York City that... like... they took the kids for a few hours a day and they threw in a ball pit, whatever they do with kids, and I was a little nervous letting you go for the first time, but I let her go and I come to pick her up. She has all her fingers, her toes. All right, she survived. I'll send her again tomorrow, and I get a note that night from the place saying, Mr. Shankman, thank you so much for allowing us to take care of Jessica. Well, her name is Jessa. Not Jessica, right, and they had one job. Right? How can I trust them not to kill my kid or remember... I ran to her room like is it the right kid? Maybe they gave me the wrong kid because they couldn't spell her name. Right? It's not that hard. Again, that goes back to being brilliant at the basics, understanding the basics, because it's so... again, the bar is so low, that if you only have 2.7 seconds, just spelling something correctly. One of every two corporate homepages in America has a spelling or grammatical error on the homepage. One out of every two. So if it's not you right now watching this, it's the person who's watching it over there. So it's as simple as that, and that's really the best way to gain that communication. Give people information the way they want it. Ask them how. There's still seven people in the world who have fax machines. If one of your clients is one of those seven, you better be faxing. Ask them how they like to get their information and give it to them the way they want.

Ramon Ray

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No, that's powerful. Peter, I want to remind, we have about five more minutes to go with Peter Shankman before we get to live Q&A. I'll remind people put it in the Questions tab. Peter is going to answer your questions, marketing, customer service, a lot of knowledge you want to get from him – tips, tools, also, and resources Peter can share with you as well, how to be more productive in your day.

Peter, a third point I want to talk about, and this has been great so far, and again, thank you for spending time with us here at the Verizon Small Business Webinar Series. Remember shankman.com to see all things Peter Shankman. One of the things to touch on, Peter, is the aspect, and you've touched on it already, we've talked about you have a short time to get somebody's attention and make a first impression. What about staying top of mind? This is something I know that we talk about quite a bit at the Verizon Series here where we're struggling, it seems, Peter, day by day to get the new customer. Peter bought from me once, how do I get Peter to buy from me again? It seems like we small businesses, as you know, you work with us, are in a rat race. Thoughts on how we can keep that attention and just keep people coming back? Is there any way to do that?

Peter Shankman

The five most underutilized words in the world are how can I help you? Every time... you mentioned earlier, and I appreciate the comment that you like my email list. Well, the one thing that you rarely see him on my email list, maybe you see it once a year, is a sales pitch. You rarely see that. What you get is information. You get things that can help you in your daily life, whatever that might be. We, as companies... companies tend to focus too much on selling and not enough on the humanistic aspect of life, which is that, hey, these people are human beings. They have problems just like everyone else. So if you're sitting there and you're saying, OK, what can I do to try to get these people to buy from me, rephrase the question. What can I get these people to do that will make them remember me when they want to buy something? And so the concept of that is offering help. Here's some information I found, I thought it might be of interest to you, hope you're having a great day. It's something as simple as that. Every email you send out doesn't have to be a sales pitch. Having someone's email address, being able to communicate with them, having an audience is a privilege. It's not a right. It's not a right. It's exactly like wearing spandex. There are very few people that have the right to wear spandex in this world. If I'm training for triathlons, and I train for a year, and I go the day of that race, I've earned the privilege of wearing spandex for that day, [inaudible] says good job, now please put on this bulky t-shirt. I get it. It's a privilege. It's not a right. The same thing with having an audience. You have an audience... having an audience is a privilege, not a right, and you have to keep earning that privilege every day, and you earn that privilege by giving them information they want the way they want it that can help them without a sales pitch, so that when they do have something to buy, you become top of mind and you're the first place they go.

Ramon Ray

So let me, again, push back on that, Peter. I can hear people complaining and rankling, and are you sure? Peter, I've got to make sales. I don't have time for some long email campaigns, drip campaign, tweet, how can I help you? It sounds very woo-woo. I've got to sell my video camera, my consulting services, my cupcakes, my doggy treats. Are you really saying that, Peter?

Peter Shankman

Would you rather that it become a three to four email process, or would you rather sell them so hard in the first email that you lose 40% of your subscribers? When you're an email... when you have an email list, that's all you've got, hey. You lose those 40% of subscribers, you're not getting them back, but if you're offering them help... so a gentleman by the name of Barry Diller. He was the head of Paramount Pictures in the 70s, took over the job... Paramount Pictures was about two seconds from bankruptcy. He did something differently than his predecessor. He walked in every day, and he pulled out 10 cards from his Rolodex. For those in the audience under 30, a Rolodex was like Outlook, it had cards, you'd turn it, and he would pull out 10 cards from his Rolodex every day, and he would just call those people and say hello. Hey, it's Barry. What are you working on in New York? How's the weather in LA? What's going on in London? He'd never sell them, but when you had a picture that you wanted [audio] an actor signed to a five-picture deal or a movie you wanted greenlit or funded or whatever, you could have gone to 20th Century Fox or Warner Brothers, or you could have called Barry

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back. Barry was top of mind, and the fact of the matter is that when you're top of mind, not only will you get the sale, but they'll bring friends. You get the customers you want by being amazing currently to the customers you have.

Ramon Ray

Yes, you're right, Peter, and I think that it's interesting. I think this is a long game we're talking about. Not too long, sales will come, but I think just to repeat what you said, which is genius, you can sell hard, hard, hard. I'm sure one or two will buy, whatever percentage, but it seems like I'm saying if you have that smile, the gentle touch and education, all the things we've talked about so far, it's the long term play, but it seems the more profitable play in the end. Does that sound about—?

Peter Shankman

Not only is it more profitable, but you have a 2.5 times more... your audience is 2.5 times more likely to buy when they remember you as opposed to when they feel like they're being forced. That's a huge number.

Ramon Ray

Yes, that is true. That is powerful. Peter, I know you have an amazing ShankMinds group and etc. What are some of the things you've learned from that group? If you could distill us, in the years you've had it, what are some common themes, common challenges that you've seen maybe, or some common tips that you're always telling? Anything we can learn from that, what you're seeing, because you're seeing the microcosm of hundreds, thousands of small business owners every quarter, every month, every year, what do you see?

Peter Shankman

I think one of the best things that I've learned is that you need it... as a small business owner, the only people you can really complain to are other small business owners. Your employees are never really going to understand what you're going through, and so because of that, have a tribe. It doesn't have to be mine. ShankMinds is a great group, but have a tribe, have a group of people who are there and who you can vent to. Have someone who you love who also does what you do, and if they... I'm very fortunate that I do, and if they don't, make sure that you have someone... make sure the person you do have understands that, yes, you don't have a normal nine to five and you don't get to come home and pretend that work doesn't exist until tomorrow morning, but then also have an accountability process. Have an accountability process so that when you say, 'OK, I have got to get this sales presentation done by Thursday', you actually get it done by Thursday.

Then the final thing I would add and this is probably the most important, your longest project in the world, the project you work the longest on is not your business, it's yourself. It is very easy to forget how to take care of yourself because you're focusing on taking care of your business. If you're not taking care of yourself, you won't be able to do anything else. The oxygen mask theory is very, very prevalent when you run a small business.

I don't know what it looks like to go out at night, at 9 p.m. not just because I have a daughter and I'm a single dad, but I don't know, because I'm usually asleep by 9 p.m. because I know that if I need to take care of myself and want to be my best, I have to exercise first thing in the morning and the only time I can do that is before my daughter wakes up, so I'm on my Peloton at 4 a.m. or I'm lifting in my living room at 5 a.m. because that is the only time I have to do it, but I know it makes me a better person. It also gives me an excuse for the time that I do devour an entire pizza.

Take care of yourself, eat a vegetable once in a while, drink a lot of water and everything else will fall into place.

Ramon Ray

Wow, Peter that is genius. With that, I'm excited, Peter, are you ready to take questions?

Peter Shankman

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I am, let's take some questions.

Ramon Ray

Let's do it, here we go.

[Technical difficulty]

—down 30-pound, 30-pound bag of M&Ms, yes, I don't think he said 20 or 10, I think he said two pounds, but the point it's a two-pound bag of M&Ms, so thanks for asking that question.

Peter, this is a question – again, we have a variety of questions here – and one of the questions is interesting. Peter, how do you shake off pesky customers? Customers come in and they're not being so nice, they're being a bit gnarly, what's that balance between shaking them off and moving on, but you need that sale. Any further thoughts on that?

Peter Shankman

I think you get into that moment where you're like, 'OK, you know what, how much do I need that sale?' my example is to what extent is this going to ruin future sales I have today, this week, this month. If I'm dealing with the client, the Annoytron 1000 client who will not stop, if I have to deal with his/her BS for two hours to make one sale, how many other sales could I have made during that time? More importantly, what kind of mood am I going to be in when I'm done with that client? Am I going to be sitting there for the next three hours, five hours, two days in a bad mood from that experience? If so, how much is that going to cost me? Every single time, it's more than I would have gotten had I just made the sale. There are times when it's actually more profitable to turn down a sale.

Ramon Ray

Great question. We have another related question, Peter. I'm going to throw you all the hard questions about masks. The question here – and for those who are listening, just to be very clear, this is not a political issue, I know that customers who are Democrat, Republican, whatever, this issue of wear masks, don't wear masks, I just want to fully clarify that for Verizon, we're not getting into politics at all here. But Peter, you have people who come into your retail store, don't wear a mask, the law says wear one, any thoughts – just to take it a bit further – ideas, how do you speak to somebody, whether it's an old lady that can't wear it or a young person, you get my point, any thoughts that you've seen or best practices for the mask issue. Somebody is irate and doesn't want to wear it. What do we do, Peter?

Peter Shankman

I think, first of all, you have to say it's amazing that we're having this conversation. The cool thing about science is that science really doesn't give a damn about your opinion. That's the awesome thing about science is that science is a proven series of facts. My logic behind that is the same logic I have if I were to dump a customer, which is that you have the right to act whichever way you want. That's the beauty of the country in which we live. We have the right to act whichever way we want, but with that right comes responsibilities and the situational awareness of what could happen if you act that way.

I have a right to go out and strip naked and scream in the streets and stop traffic, but I'm probably going to be taken in for a psych evaluation. That's the result of that.

My basic premise is this, here's how my store works. Here are the things that I need you to do to be in my store. If you don't want to do that, you can go, you have that right, but not in my store, you have that right to go to another store.

There's a great quote I saw at a restaurant. There's a sign on the wall that said, 'We would like you to wear a mask in here, but we understand if you don't want to, but you should also keep in mind that we like our employees... it's kind of the law for them to wash their hands when they're done in the bathroom, but they have freedom of choice, and so if they don't wash their hands, if some of

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whatever they have on their hands gets in your food, you understand...’ you’ve got to make that point, but at the end of the day, this is science and this not only affects me as a business owner, it affects my kid, it affects my parents.

Ramon Ray

What I’m hearing you say, Peter, is I think most people are going to be reasonable. I think what I’m hearing also, lets explain it, and at the end of the day, one thing to not do – tell me if you think I’m right, Peter – is to get into an argument and yell about whatever the situation is, because you will always lose and be on the wrong end of whatever.

Peter Shankman

Again, I go back to how I talk to my daughter. Honey, I need you to clean that room. Why? Because it’s dirty and we’re going to clean it up now. Smiling face. That’s it. End of the discussion. I’m big, you are small, I win. Same thing when you’re talking to people of that nature. You don’t have to wear a mask, but you’re going to wear one in this store. If you don’t want to [audio] other store.

Ramon Ray

Peter, let’s talk to that exasperated business owner. We have a question in here and I can hear their frustration in their voice. Peter, I’m trying to run a business, I’m trying to get an efficient team, we’re just getting up into hiring, Peter, Can you underline again, Peter, this aspect of customer experience, customer service. I can hear kind of the frustration, they’re just trying to build their little business and Peter is saying focus on the customer. Help for them. What do you tell Jenny or Bob or whoever is asking this great question?

Peter Shankman

Well, the customer is the one, at the end of the day, who is going to build your business, not you. What you do is going to help build your business, but the customer is the one spending the money. One piece of advice that I always like to give people who are in the process of hiring, don’t have them come in and sit in your office for a boring interview like everyone else. When they show up, I call it “Pulling an Aaron Sorkin”. Have you ever watched the *Newsroom* or the *West Wing*, everything they do is a walk and talk? They might have these long seven-minute one camera shot walk and talks, but they’re brilliant television. Do the same thing. Take the potential employee, throw in a couple of masks, walk to the corner Starbucks, walk to the corner diner, whatever, grab a cup of coffee, walk around and talk with them. but watch them. See how they engage with the person making the coffee. See how they engage when someone is on their phone walking directly towards them and doesn’t get out of their way. Do they say, excuse me, or do they go, ‘yo, move!’ Look at them in the natural environment.

We go to zoos to watch animals in their natural environment, put people in their natural environment. Everyone, when they’re being interviewed is on their best behavior. Put them in the street, see how they’re doing, that will give you an idea of whether or not (a) you want to work with them (their style) and (b) do they have empathy? Do they have that empathy for their fellow human being, which is what is going to help you grow your business?

Ramon Ray

You’re so right, Peter. Because when Peter Shankman is interviewing you and you’re ‘yes, Mr. Shankman, yes, Mr. Shankmaning-him versus’—

Peter Shankman

It’s not real.

Ramon Ray

Go out with my friend or just go out for a few hours, a real different game.

*How to create the ideal customer experience in the new normal***Peter Shankman**

That's another thing. The majority of my interviews take place super, super early, because my logic is if you want to meet me and pick my brain, I have a responsibility to give back, I will, but we're doing it at 5:30 in the morning during a run or during a cycling class, because like you said, it's great Darwinism, 99% of the people won't meet with me, the 0.5% that is willing to get up that early tells me that they have what it takes right off the bat.

Ramon Ray

That's for sure. Listen, I will say that we have some questions here. Somebody asked about Verizon and customer service and all that. Listen, from my experience, Verizon has outstanding customer service. Sometimes things happen, things drop through the cracks, so I will say to you people on there, if you want to email me directly, I'm happy to help facilitate. ramon@smarthustle.com or reach out to our team in the chat, they will [audio] customers, those of you who are talking about your phones and things like that, we love you too and we will do our best to help you, so feel free to reach out to me directly and I'm happy to help that as best I can.

Peter, somebody asked about attention and referring back to what you created some years ago, helped a reporter out. Any idea – this is very broad, I don't know if you want to give a scenario for retail/non-retail, but what are two or three, four simple things we can do to get attention for our business as we're all trying to scramble to get people to buy from us. General thoughts on that.

Peter Shankman

From a PR perspective, the key to getting great PR is thinking like a reporter, not like someone who wants great PR. Reporters today are doing 10 times more with five times less. The reporters who are lucky enough to still have a job are now covering three, four, five, six beats at the same time. So instead of pitching and saying, 'hey, my company is great, you should write about us', no one is going to listen, no one is going to believe that. Again, it goes back to what we said earlier, no one believes how great you are when you're the one who has to tell them. What can you do instead to help the reporter, you could offer the reporter help, understanding that the reporter has so much on his plate or her plate, craft a story idea. Instead of saying, 'my company is doing really well during the pandemic, because we do X', talk to a couple of your competitors and say, 'hey, look, I'm going to pitch a story to the media about our industry and I know we're competitors, but today we're going to work together, give me a couple of examples about how things are working for you, we're all doing really well in this industry, lets pitch a story about our industry to report'. A reporter is 100 times more likely to bite on that, because they think, 'oh wow, in the midst of all this nightmare that's going on with COVID, here's a good story about some good stuff that's coming out of it'. Whatever it is. But instead of saying, 'look how great we are, it's look what's happening in this industry, this is an interesting story for your readers'. At the end of the day, if you make the reporter happy, you're going to be happy by default.

Ramon Ray

You're right, Peter. I think when you think about this and sometimes – and I've gotten caught up in this, 'oh, a magazine did Barack Obama on the cover, they did Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook changed their logo, they wrote about them, they should write about my bagel shop, I changed my logo'. Is that right, Peter? We get caught up... these people are not us.

Peter Shankman

You might have the best bagels in the world, but the difference between you and Facebook is about 6.7 billion people, not dissing those bagels, I'm sure they are amazing. I'm an everything with cream cheese and lux guy, but you have to look at the bigger picture, so instead of saying, 'hey, I want to be on the cover of Forbes', start saying, 'hey, in the midst of a pandemic, I find that bagel sales are up, because people need comfort food', there's a pitch.

Ramon Ray

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Wow, that is genius. We should have another session called Pitch Peter. People are asking, how do I join Peter's email list and things like this. Two things I will just say. One, for those who are asking about how to get this replay, just remember, the same link you went to, BrightTALK link, BrightTALK has all your information, you can see the archives in there, we are here to serve you, so check out this presentation, if you came in late, and other ones we've given in the Verizon Small Business Webinar Series. For Peter's email list, very simple, and other things he's doing, shankman.com. A number of resources he has. I've been on his list and affiliated with things Peter has been doing for years. You will enjoy it, so just check that out, shankman.com, best place to go for all things Peter Shankman.

Another question here, Peter, which is pretty interesting is that people, again, keep asking about tips and tips for their business and things of this nature. What things can we do that are different maybe, Peter? You talked about just be one better. Again, these are general questions, I know, but I know you can handle it. Any thoughts where, let's say we're an accounting firm, let's take that example, any ideas for how do we get one better, because as you said, every accounting firm has a website, every accounting firm can give you water in the office. How do we start to think even generally of how to do just a bit better?

Peter Shankman

Again, let's look at the concept of empathy. Imagine... during these crazy times, I have a phenomenal accountant, I've been using him for 20 years. Within three days of the Government offering the small business loans and all that, my guy called me out of the blue. He said, 'hey, FYI, you can get stimulus money if you need it, but I don't think you need it, and since you don't actually need it, you probably shouldn't take it. It's going to be a pain in the butt, it's a lot of red tape, if you don't need it, don't bother taking it'. I wouldn't have known that. He didn't charge me for that. He's like, 'hey, let me call my clients'.

My financial advisor, the one who handles my retirement money and everything, he's like, he's smart enough to understand me where if I want to invest in something, me and my ADHD, if I want to invest in something, I'm going to mortgage the house, he's like, we're not going to do that', so what he does is he keeps a little bit of money, not a lot, a very little bit in an account for me and he says this is your playground. You can play with this money. We're not touching your retirement, and so he caters to me and gives me that ability to take those chances on a much smaller scale because he's taken the time to get to know me.

The simple act of getting to know your clients and your customers, maybe one of your accounting clients is a fisherman, so maybe the premise of you subscribe to a fishing magazine, what does it cost you, 12 bucks a year but now you're knowledgeable, and now the next time you talk to him, you know a little bit about what he loves and that's going to go a long way towards driving that passion.

Ramon Ray

Any different advice, Peter, for those who are launching a business in COVID? If it's the same advice, we can move onto another question, but I'm curious, a number of people are launching business like today, like last week, maybe they signed contracts before and they have no choice to start, or they're just starting. And we're happy for you, by the way. Thoughts on particular – this time to be careful of or to do that you're saying in this time where airlines are down, we're sheltering in place, you've got to wear masks, any broad level ideas that come to mind?

Peter Shankman

Great movie in the 80s called *Say Anything* and John Cusack, the girl he is in love comes back to him and John Cusack says, 'I just need to know, are you back with me because you needed someone or because you needed me?' it's a really powerful question. Ask the same the thing. Are you starting a business because it's your passion and this is the right time to do it or because you have no choice.

If it's because you have no choice, you're not going to love it. Make sure that the business you're starting you absolutely love and then when you start it, you're not afraid to pour your heart into it. As you're building it and as it's growing and as you're doing those things, everything you do becomes that business. Understand that there are going to be good days and bad days. Everyone is like, 'oh my god, you have such a great life, you're having so much fun', I'm like, 'because I only share the good stuff, I'm not going to waste your time

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and talk to you about my incredibly crap day yesterday and how I wound up having to go out for a second and third bike ride because I was so angry, no, I'm going to talk to you about the good stuff. Be aware that you're going to have bad days and make sure you have a tribe of people to talk to about those bad days so it doesn't always sit there and affect you, because you're going to have great days. But most entrepreneurs, we have two speeds, we have Namaste and I'm going to kill someone, there's no middle ground, so you have to have that middle ground, you have to be able to talk to someone.

Ramon Ray

Peter, I'm glad you brought that up, I want to echo that to all the people who say similar things to me, because as you know, Peter, I'm a publicly and privately up-beat person, happy person, but you said it, I was always wondering why people say that, but thank you for sharing about myself even, I don't go around telling people all the bad things I'm going through with my family or things that are happening, that's—

[Technical difficulty]

—great point, Peter. Peter, I know that you have delight and surprises. You're the guy who sold t-shirts on a corner in bad times etc. Somebody has a question here about thank you cards and emails. Anything come to mind for this person? They like thank you cards, they like emails. Anything they should consider doing to make it fun, pop, sizzle, anything that comes to mind for you?

Peter Shankman

I have absolutely no stake in this company whatsoever, I don't own their shares, I'm not an investor, but I'm in love with it, it's called TouchNote. It's a little app that sits on your phone, whenever you meet a new client, whatever, take a selfie with them, grab your phone, take a selfie, as soon as they leave, you upload that photo to TouchNote and it sends them a postcard, a physical actual postcard within five days. You can write on it, whatever you want, thanks so much, great meeting, whatever. I do that after every single one of my speeches. I've gotten repeat business from that more times than I can imagine. I think it costs a dollar a postcard, but you're sending a postcard out and they get something in the mail. Oh, wow, that was the guy who took a picture, that's so cool. They're not going to throw that out, they're going to keep it on the desk, they're going to remember you.

Again, it's those little tiny things that you can do that are just a little bit different. The concept of sending out a postcard, who sends out a postcard with my photo on. Greatest thing ever. Those little tiny things that make you 1% better, your goal, again is to be remembered not simply recalled.

Ramon Ray

Wow! Peter, it does work. People don't realize it, but I know you're a person who a lot of people want to reach in one way or another, you're a celebrity, Peter, whether you will admit it or not, you are, and when you get... we're all human, though, right, you get that postcard in the mail, you get that box of chocolates from what's that, [Wolverton] that famous company [inaudible], you remember, you just can't help it, because we're all human, you just can't help it.

Peter Shankman

My last in-person keynote was early March in Vegas. I did that. I took the selfie with the CEO of the group that brought me down. Last week, the guy reached out, he is like, 'hey, we're looking for a virtual keynote for October, I saw your postcard, he's like what are your fees for virtual', I'm like boom, there's my mortgage for two months. It's those kinds of things for what, a \$1 postcard.

Ramon Ray

It happens all the time. Listen, we've got so many questions pouring in. Again, everybody remember, if we don't get to your question, you're welcome, I encourage you, go to shankman.com, Peter will do his best, he is a very generous person, to try to answer, work with you in some way, shape or form, but just go to shankman.com—

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Peter Shankman

Tweet me, whatever.

Ramon Ray

For sure. Like I said, email me directly, ramon@smarthustle.com, that's for me, especially those of you who have questions about Verizon, happy to work through and facilitate as best I can.

Details, Peter, people just want you to underline that again this aspect of employees coming first and empathy and employees. You said it, but can you recap that for us, this aspect of focusing on your employees, focusing on caring for their needs, recap that for us.

Peter Shankman

You've got to care about your employees. Your employee is the lifeblood, and here is why, it takes every single employee to keep your business running at an optimum level. It takes every single employee to keep that customer experience perfect. It takes one employee to blow it. All it takes – if I'm renting a car from you and I've had 20 great experiences throughout my time renting a car and then I go to one place and the person doesn't care or they give me attitude or my car is not ready and they're not helping me, well, does that tarnish that one person or does that tarnish the brand? It tarnishes the brand. So that empathy for your employees and understanding your employees and understanding that employees have bad days too, they're human beings, and taking care of them and showing them that they matter is huge, because let's face it, the current thinking around big companies is if you get fired, they're not going to give you two weeks' notice, screw them. If you're a small business, the best opportunity you have over the big businesses is simply to show that you care about your employees and that they matter to you. If you do that, they're going to go out of their way to not only sell for you, but they're going to defend your business with their last dying breaths.

Ramon Ray

So true. Going back to this aspect of postcards and things like that, Peter, I've used a service, I know you know it well, we should have a whole session with you just about tips and tools, is BombBomb.com, I use that for video, postcards, video, whatever you want to do, it's great.

I'm going to probably try to wrap it up, Peter, with this point here. We're going to have one or two more questions, so keep your questions coming in. But someone challenged, and you know, Peter, I say this kind of tongue in cheek, someone challenged, "Is Peter saying 2.7 or 3?" whatever, the point is, is it that low of seconds before people get the attention to the side versus a large amount of time. I have my own answer, Peter, but can you respond back to them? They're saying, in essence, it probably takes a bit longer, I have some more time before people want to work with me and make decisions. Thoughts, what do you say to them about that?

Peter Shankman

I'm sorry, I saw something shiny over there, what no, but that's my point, yes, there are situations where you're going to have more than three seconds, it's a generalized number, but the premise is from the first time they find out about you, that first second where they're looking you up or they catch your online ad or your commercial or they see a video or they catch an Instagram post, whatever, on average, their finger is ready to keep scrolling. Look at it that way. The first sentence you say is so important that it has to stop their finger from scrolling. If you can do that, they will stick around, and the best way to do that is give them smart information, spell it correctly, become a better speaker, a better communicator, a better writer, whatever it is, make them want to stop their finger from scrolling.

Ramon Ray

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That is powerful. I think that's so true. I think stop the scroll, and I think it works, Peter, we're in this online world here, but you and I know both, as speakers, it happens in person as well. It doesn't mean everybody's going to like Peter's style or my style, but the point is we're aware that people are watching us, so—

Peter Shankman

I'll take it a step further, in this COVID environment that we're currently in, the amount of – pardon me – but the amount of crap that I've been buying off of Instagram ads and Facebook ads and whatever lately is through the roof, so now's that time where just a little bit better, they're going to stop and probably buy from you.

Ramon Ray

For sure. Peter, another person asks, I think, a great question. Those who are listening to us... we have about one or two minutes, those who are listening to us, Peter, and they're saying, I've not been such a good boss in building this culture that Peter is talking about, besides firing and hiring differently, any things that people should start doing? Should we have better meetings? Should we maybe showcase it more? You said that already, if we're not living it, that's a big way to do it. But anything else to those who are like, 'you know what, let me check-in and see are we an empathetic company? How are we doing for the people who have not thought about it?' thoughts on that, Peter?

Peter Shankman

One of the best pieces of advice I ever got, again, it's you want to do things for your employees that create dopamine. Dopamine is that focus chemical, it's the happy chemical, it's the same chemical we get when we eat a lot of chocolate. If you can do things that create dopamine, you will have a better employee group and they will have better employee morale. Simple things like don't hold sit-down meetings. If you can have walking meetings, do those. Try to keep your meetings to 20 minutes. Anything more than 20 minutes, people start to fade. No one has ever gotten fired for bringing in a dozen donuts every once in a while. No one has ever been told they're a horrible boss because they ordered pizza for the staff on a random Tuesday. The little tiny things you could do, it doesn't cost a lot, it doesn't take a lot, but it will earn you a fortune in response and in result.

Ramon Ray

Peter, I know we could go on, you and I, for the next hour—

Peter Shankman

No question.

Ramon Ray

Thank you so much for having us. Remember ladies and gentlemen, go see Peter's information at shankman.com, join his email list, I'm ramonray.com and we're going to hear a final message from Verizon before we close this session out.

Chris Serico

That's all for today's webinar. Thank you so much Peter and Ramon for sharing inspiring and unique ideas for how small businesses can take their customer experiences to the next level and evolve for today's business environment.

Now, in the Attachments tab, you will see that I'm sharing a link and some information from today, and you can check out all the other webinars in this series on our BrightTALK channel page. Be sure to tune into our next webinar on Tuesday, 18 August with Mari Smith to see how you can take your small business and help it shine and stand out with Facebook and Instagram stories.

I hope you will join us again on 18 August and for all the events in our Small Business Webinar Series.

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Thanks again for joining us. We will see you soon.