

Verizon

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

CORPORATE PARTICIPANTS

Andy Choi

Verizon

Karen Tiber Leland

Sterling Marketing Group – President, and best-selling author

The statements and opinions by Karen Tiber Leland do not reflect the views or opinions of Verizon and its affiliates.

PRESENTATION

Andy Choi

Hi, I'm Andy Choi with Verizon. I want to welcome all of you to our Small Business Webinar Series. Thank you so much for joining us today. 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. Now, our guest today is Karen Tiber Leland. She's a best-selling author of nine, count them *nine*, books including *The Brand Mapping Strategy: Design, Build, and Accelerate Your Brand*. Karen is a highly sought-after expert and today she's here with us to share steps to manage the changes for small businesses in a COVID world and create offers that matter to your customers right now. Definitely a challenge that is testing all small businesses today, so let's get to it. Here now is Karen Tiber Leland.

Karen Tiber Leland

Hi everyone, Karen Tiber Leland here, and I'm just so happy to be joining you for this Verizon Small Business series, and what I'm going to talk about today is how you can future-proof your business post-COVID-19. I really want to talk to you about what I call new offers for a new world, because the truth is before January 2020, I know we were all looking at the past and saying, hey, what are we going to do in the future, what are we going to do in the future in terms of what we did in the past, and how can we make this year even better than last year, and then all of a sudden, March happened, and we went, wow, it's not the same world we were living in before, and so really, I'm going to talk about what do we need to do now as small business people to really make our businesses successful.

And in fact, I've done quite a bit of research on this, and what I found out is there's three sea changes that are really happening in the world of business that we all need to be aware of, and we need to manage in order to make sure that we're growing and even thriving – not just surviving, but thriving, not only through COVID-19, but past COVID-19, and the first one is what I call the switch from vendor to resource.

The truth is that right now trust is the only capital that we have. That's it. If we're trusted by our clients, if we're trusted by the consumers we work with, if we're trusted by our employees, if we're trusted by the business world in general, that's our only capital right now, and part of what we have to do to be trusted is we have to be companies that are proactive, not reactive. So, I want to give you one really simple example that I think we all have experienced, or everybody at least heard about, and this was during the PPP loan, the first round of PPP loan. It was supposed to be for small businesses, but I know a lot of people heard that companies like Ruth's Chris Steakhouse got it, as did Shake Shack, which are both not small businesses. They're both fairly large companies. So, one of the things that happened was, as you probably know, Ruth's Chris got a huge amount of negative feedback for taking this PPP money, as did Shake Shack. Well, interestingly enough, Shake Shack immediately very proactively said you know what, you're right. We don't need that money. We're not going to take it, we're giving it back, like almost immediately. Whereas Ruth's Chris took their time, and they hemmed and hawed, and they were like, well, we're not sure. Maybe we should take it, maybe we shouldn't, and finally, in the end, they did give it back, but it was a little bit too late, because their reputation had already been impacted, and so really, in the post-COVID-19 world, the equation for trust, whether you're a big business or a small business, is this: doing the right thing.

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

You can only create trust if you do the right thing, but then you have to do it in the right way. So, it isn't just doing the right thing. It's doing it in the right way, and then it's adding timing to it, doing it in the right timing. That's what equals trust, and so even if you're a small business, you have to think about, are we doing the right thing in the right way, with the right timing, because those three elements are really what are creating trust today, because it really is all about this switch from just being a vendor to being a resource. I'll just give you another simple example for me. When this whole COVID thing started in about March or April, like many people, my business took a dip. It's come back, but it took a dip in March and April. So, because I'm someone that's always paid my credit cards off, my business credit cards and my personal credit cards 100%, always paid them off in full every month, I called the bank. I had three credit cards, and I called all three banks and I said, hey, I always pay my credit cards off in full for years and years and years, but next month, I'm going to ask you if I can just pay half the bill and not have you charge me any interest. Would you do that? Well, two of the credit card companies said, oh, my goodness, of course, yes, you're a good customer. You've been with us a long time. We know what's going on with COVID. We'll be happy to do that. But the third credit card company said, no, we're not doing that. We'll be charging you interest, and I said, really? Because the other two credit card companies aren't going to. You sure you don't want to change your mind, and they said, nope, that's the way it is. OK. Fine. No problem. We paid the interest, but I told my assistant cancel that credit card, we're not going to use them moving forward. Well, they didn't do the right thing. Number one. Number two, they didn't do it in the right way. Eventually, they came back to us and said you know what, we've changed our mind, there's not going to be any – months later, there's not going to be any charges. There's not going to be any extra interest charges. Too late, wrong timing. Right? They were treating me, and they were acting like a resource, not like a vendor.

So, one of the most important things is you have to think about how are you showing up for your clients, because the truth is, the status quo isn't an option anymore. We all have to be going one step beyond if we're going to survive and even thrive in this world of COVID. Bain & Company did some really interesting research a few years ago, and what they found out was if you want to mitigate the threat, and accelerate the recovery from any kind of a crisis, you have to transform your value proposition, and again, big company, small company, it doesn't matter. You have to transform your value proposition if you want to accelerate after recovery, and there were five things that they said you had to look at, and you didn't necessarily have to do all five of these, but you have to consider these five and think about which of these five applies to you. So, I really want to encourage you, as I'm going through these five, to think about, for your business, which of these five could you take on right now, because any of them that you do will really help you thrive not only during COVID, but post-COVID.

And the first one is repricing. It's asking yourself how can you create free or reduced cost offerings to capture new business, because a lot of people I talked to were like, I'm not changing my prices, and I was like you want to think about some repricing as a strategy for how to survive and thrive in COVID and post-COVID. Another one is how to refocus your message. How can you elevate your brand messages around your features and your capabilities that are the most relevant today? This is another thing that I've been working a lot with clients on, is where is your message post-COVID, and where is your message post-COVID... pre-COVID and post-COVID, so that you're actually being more relevant for the world that we're in today. The third one is fast brand enhancement, which is how can you launch a new offering with minimal investment for the purpose of driving brand awareness. I'll give you an example just for myself. One of the new offerings I created pretty early on was working with executives and coaching them in executive presence on video, because I've done executive presence work and personal branding executive presence for years and years and years, but with everyone using video, I realized it was a new skill set. So, I quickly came up with a brand offering that I could put out to clients that was contemporary, that was relevant. It was quick, I could be up to speed on it, I priced it well, and as a result, it started getting me some business and some clients when I was seeing a dip in the traditional business. The other one is how can you evolve existing offers. How can you reinvent a current offer that you have, so that it's more relevant in today's situation, and then lastly, how can you create new offerings for a new normal? What new world offerings you can create that will be commercially relevant in today's new normal?

We do have a new normal. People are working from home, people are using video more, people aren't traveling as much. There's all these new normals and every business needs to ask itself, how can I create a new offer for the new world we're in and the new normal,

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

and that applies whether you're a service business or whether you're product business, it doesn't matter. It's a question we all need to ask ourselves.

So, I want to give you one example that I love, which is everybody's on Zoom meetings these days, everybody's on video conferencing. So, there's an organization, there's a company called Sweet Farm, and they do sustainable farming, and they realized that one of the big opportunities they had during all these meetings was that they could create something they've never done before, and they could offer something that they called Goat-2-Meeting. Not GoToMeeting, goat, like a goat, Goat-2-Meeting, and what they did was they offered people for \$100 on a big Zoom meeting, they would Zoom in or they would video conference in a goat or a llama, and you could have a goat or a llama on the meeting, and really, it just added a little levity and a little interest and a little humor to the meeting, and they've actually turned that into a business, so they don't only have their agricultural business, they have their Goat-2-Meeting business, but that to me is a perfect example of someone that figured out, OK, we need to create a new offer for a new world, we need to take what we do and go one step beyond and think about it differently. So, that's number one.

The second really big sea change is going from selling to service. It's really selling versus service. So, nobody wants to be sold today, everybody wants to be served and nobody wants to be sold, and so the companies that are doing really, really well in COVID, or at least are figuring out how to make their businesses work and are looking to create thriving post-COVID, are companies that are learning how to serve. So, I'll give you some really simple examples. LVMH, the big luxury company, started making masks. They realized that they had these entire factories that had been making luxury clothes and luxury purses and luxury goods, and they turned them into factories for making masks. So, they started serving their community rather than trying to sell more of what they did.

You have chewy.com, which is a company that provides pet products, they offered 3 million in free pet supplies to animal welfare groups that were dealing with animal welfare that had to do with COVID, right? A simple example, but a great way to show service, not selling.

Birchbox did this wonderful program called "More Than a Beauty Box", and they gave 40,000 free grooming boxes to help hospital staff and nurses. So, this idea of contributing back to the community, this idea of serving versus selling, is one of the things that's become very important during COVID. By the way, it doesn't mean that we don't market our products. It doesn't mean we don't brand our businesses. It doesn't mean we don't sell our services, but it means that the attitude or the place where we're coming from is this attitude or this place of serving, not selling.

And there's a place where I have found that to be really interesting, and that's in the area of PR, and more than ever, PR, if you do it for your company and media for your company, has got to be about what you're contributing and what you're serving and what you're bringing, not what you're selling. I've never seen the media so resisting anything that even looks like or smells like selling.

There's really five requirements for doing PR in this COVID era, this kind of breaking news era, and it's not selling what you do. It's really about what you can contribute and the service you can bring, and there's a few things you have to think about, and one is, do you have demonstrated expertise? So, what media is looking for right now is they're looking for people to be on air, to be on camera, or to be on the radio or to interview that really have a very clear demonstrated expertise that relates, usually, to something COVID related. They're also looking for a relevant story. Is your story relevant to what's happening now? Are you able to educate, entertain, and enlighten them? Those are the only three things they're interested in right now – education, entertainment, or enlightenment. Is your timing good? Are you timing what you're pitching to the media so that it fits into the news cycle? The news cycle used to be a week, then it used to be 24 hours. Now it can be an hour or less. News stories happen so fast and media cycles happens so fast that your timing has to be just spot on. And then the other thing is, is there online validation, and I'm going to talk about that a little bit later, but are you online looking like someone who is respectable, and this is actually a problem for a lot of people. A lot of both individuals in their personal brand, and a lot of businesses in their business brand, especially small businesses, don't have their online life together. The way they look online isn't really effective. It's not representing them. The way I talk about it is there's this gap. There's who you are as a business, and then there's how you're represented online, and if there's a gap between those things, then what falls through that gap are opportunities, possibilities, clients, investors. So, the goal today is you've really got to close that gap between you and how you look

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

online. So, just remember that when we're talking about service versus selling, if you're doing PR and media, you're not selling to the media, you're not selling them, you're serving them. You're really providing information that serves.

So, what does that mean for you as a small business owner? Well, what this means as a small business owner is that you have to be showing your clients in everyday ways that you are committed to being a resource for them. So, what is your plan? You have to ask yourself as the small business owner, as the CEO, what is your plan for rethinking how you do business in the short term, and what is your long term plan to meet your customers' needs where they are now? So, how are you going to meet their needs short term and what is your long-term plan for meeting their needs? It's really about defining your brand, not having it be by default. So, asking yourself, how can you show your clients in an everyday way that you're committed to being a resource, and planning for rethinking how you do business in the short term and meeting your customers' needs in the long-term, is the way that you define your brand and you do your marketing.

All right, and then one of the three big sea changes that I want to talk about is this change from live or virtual to live and virtual. In the old days, here's how it went. Everybody knew live was the way to go, and if you could do it live, you wanted to do it live. If you could go to the conference live, that was the best bet. If you could have the meeting live, that was the best bet, and if you had to Skype in or Zoom in, or you had to do it virtually, OK, it wasn't that terrible, but it wasn't preferred. Well, all of that has changed with COVID, and now with COVID what we have is a model where it's not live or virtual, where virtual is the stepchild of live, it's live and virtual. I think moving forward, we're going to see all hybrid models. In other words, we'll have a live conference, but there'll always be a very strong virtual piece to the conference. We'll have live meetings, there'll always be a very strong virtual piece. We'll have live trainings, there'll always be a very strong virtual piece. We'll have products that obviously get delivered live, but there'll be a strong virtual piece about how you use the product. So, we're really living in an and, not an or world when it comes to virtual now, and a lot of companies are being forced into that, but they're not really thinking it through.

So, I want to give you just a couple of examples, which is wine tasting. With wine tasting, you think how could you do wine tasting virtually? It's a completely live experience. Well, there are businesses that actually figured out in COVID that if they wanted to keep selling wine, they had to do wine tastings, and they had to figure out how to do them virtually. So, there's a company called The Wine Stream, and what they did was they hosted virtual wine tastings, and they literally would get groups of people together, who could get together on Zoom, and they'd have somebody who led the wine tasting and they found a way to completely online, virtually, create a wine tasting. My prediction is that even when you go back to live wine tastings, that will keep happening. That's like an and, not an or.

Another great example of this is actually a business called Webit, which I was scheduled to speak at. Webit is a conference that gets done every year. I was scheduled to go in June and moderate a panel and speak in June of this year in Spain. Obviously, that did not happen. So, the Webit people had to really quickly get up to speed on how to do virtual, so they started doing all of their conferences virtually, they started doing all of their planning programs virtually, and they have quadrupled their audience. So, the amount of people they would have expected to come to a live program in June in Spain, they're getting four and five times those amount of people on their one hour webinars that they do and their panels that they do and their conferences that they do online, and they do them five days a week. So, they have literally quadrupled the audience that knows about them and participates with them. Now, a certain amount of those people, when they go live again, will come to the live conference, but they will always have a piece of their business now that they do virtually. A huge change for them.

So, as CEOs, as small business owners, we have to be asking ourselves, how can we take advantage of the virtual options for our business, and what is our plan for integrating virtual into our business today in ways that will impact tomorrow? You don't want to wait and get caught behind. You really want to be thinking about this integration, not just now, but for the future.

There's one other piece of virtual that's really important to understand as a small business owner, as a CEO, and that's that more eyeballs than ever are looking at your company and you as a CEO online. I mean, think about it. People are at home. Even if they're back to work, not everyone's working at home, not everyone's working full time from work, some people are still working at home, you

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

have this whole switch in how people work and more eyeballs than ever are focused online, and so yes, our website and our social net are now more than ever.

So, I'm going to tell you a story. I was speaking to a reporter the other day who was interviewing me for a story, and I said to her, what other stories are you working on, and she mentioned another story, totally out of my field of expertise, and I said, oh, I have a really good resource for you, and she said it's funny. You're about the third person to recommend that resource to me to interview, she said, but I went to that guy's website, and his website's terrible, his social's terrible. She said, I know he's a really qualified source, but I can't use him because if I use him, a reader might look him up, and then the reader will see his website and his social and see how bad it is, and it will reflect poorly on me. OK, now, so think about that. Here's a reporter, they know this guy's a great resource, that he'd be a great person to interview, but she can't use him because of how he looks online, and so our website and our social do matter.

I'll tell you another story. I did some PR for a client, some media placement for a client. I'd been telling them for a year I thought they needed to redo their website, that their website really doesn't work, and the CEO didn't want to spend the money. He thought, well, it's OK the way it is, and no matter what I said they wouldn't change their website. So, I did some PR for them and I warned them that I thought their website would hurt them and he said, well, just give it a try anyway. OK. Did some PR for them, we got a 30% open rate. If you know anything about PR, you know that a 30% open rate is extraordinary, especially in the time of COVID. Getting a 30% open rate from media in the time of COVID is amazing. We got a 30% open rate, companies like The New York Times, CNBC, Small Business Daily, lots of reasons high profile... the BBC, lots of really high profile organizations opened and read the press release, and many of them clicked through to the website. Well, guess how many of them actually followed up and wanted a story? Zero. And I tried to explain to my CEO that's because how you look online, your website, doesn't match what it is that we're saying about you, and today, how we look online – that's the virtual piece, how we look online is critically important and makes a difference. So, if you haven't done it already, you've got to make sure your website and your social media are really up to speed in order to be able to compete now and post-COVID. A lot of the work I find I'm doing right now with companies is just making sure that they're where they need to be either with their personal social media or their business social media and their business websites, which brings me to another point, which is, if you're the CEO or you're a small business owner, it is no longer an option. You must have a strong CEO brand and you must be a strong social CEO.

There's lots of statistics that I could quote, but I'm just going to give you a couple. There have been some studies done and here are [audio] of the people interviewed said that a CEO's reputation plays an important role in attracting employees to a company as well as motivating those employees to stay. Another report said that 50% of high performing CEOs have two or more social media accounts, while 72% of low performing CEOs had zero or only one social media account, and then the last one is that 48% of a company's reputation can be attributed to the standing of its CEO. So, it isn't just your business that has to have a good online reputation. It's you. You as the CEO and the small business owner have to have a good solid CEO reputation. So, if you're a small business owner, you have to be asking yourself, is our current company's online presence, our website or social, up to date? Are they user friendly? Are we presenting our brand authentically and in the best light, and then you have to ask yourself, what is the plan for creating a parallel brand between my business and my CEO brand? Am I doing what I need to do to be an engaged social CEO?

Harvard Business Review actually did some research a while back and they've brought it forward again, and they said that when companies survive and thrive after a crisis, post crisis, they do a lot of things, but one of the key things that they do is they get what Harvard Business Review called the prevention/promotion balance correct. Preventing yourself from going out of business by watching the numbers and the economy and how you're spending money, but also making sure you've got promoting your business done in the right way. And to me, and this is the last one I want to talk to you about, this is the fourth sea change, and to me, this is your bonus sea change, it's what I call from drunk to sober marketing. Actually, the topic of my next book, or the title of my next book is *Drunk Marketing*, because what I find is that we live in a world particularly pre-COVID that was a lot of drunk marketing. It was a lot of people saying things like this. "You have to do Facebook ads. You could sell millions." "If you're not on Instagram, you're missing the boat." Podcasting is hot." I had a client call me once and she was hysterical. We've got to be on Snapchat. I'm not on Snapchat. Snapchat's the hottest thing and I said, wait a minute, wait a minute. Your clients are 55 to 65-year-old women who don't work, they're

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

at home. Those women are not on Snapchat. They might be on Pinterest, but they're not on Snapchat. So, drunk marketing is this kind of crazy marketing we've been in where everybody thinks they have to have their hands in everything, and they have to be doing all the most popular hot things, but with no real research behind it. So, to me, one of the big sea changes we're going to see is from all of this flash to a lot of substance, and the substance is going to be happening through what I call sober marketing.

And sober marketing is pretty simple. It's a combination of some research – it doesn't have to be a huge amount of research, but it's doing some research. It's taking a look at where your audience is actually consuming their information. It's taking a look at what your audience is actually talking about. For my own business, when COVID started, I did some research on COVID and small businesses. I did some social research. I actually looked online at about 135,000 comments people were making on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, forums, Reddit, to see what our small businesses saying about small business and COVID, and then I identified some themes, and then I was able to create some programs around those themes. I was able to write articles and blogs around those themes. I was able to do podcasts around those themes as a way to reach my audience. That's the sober part of marketing. So, it starts with a little bit of research, and that research should influence your strategy, so that you're coming up with a marketing strategy and a branding strategy that's not based on this kind of hype, we've got to do this, we've got to do that, but it's actually based in some research. And then the last thing is, you have to apply that research to some common sense. You make some basic assumptions that you know to be true from all the years you've been doing what you've been doing so that you have this strategy based in a little bit of research, that you've applied with a few assumptions that are reasonable, that then create a sober marketing and branding strategy.

So, for me, the way I did my Instagram totally changed based on what I found out in that research, because my Instagram was all nice pictures. I'm a photographer as a hobby, so my Instagram was all these nice pictures and it looked good and beautiful, but it wasn't moving the needle at all on my Instagram. After doing the research I did, I realized, oh, I need to be doing a lot more content and a lot more content of a lot more certain types, and I changed my Instagram and like instantly more followers, more engagement, but it wasn't based in this drunk marketing of just making it up and throwing it at the wall and seeing what stuck. It was based in this sober marketing of a little bit of research combined with some reasonable assumptions and applying that to the strategy, and those are the things that really make a difference.

So, what we have to be asking ourselves as small business owners, and as CEOs, is what criteria are we using to make our tactical marketing decisions, and then have we created a six to 12-month overall branding and marketing strategy based on sober marketing versus drunk marketing? You'd be surprised how often the answer to that question when I talk to people is no, we haven't. So, those are the four sea changes that you really need to think about as you look at how to create new offers for a new world in this age of COVID, and obviously, I'm going to take questions and answer your questions, but those are just some of the things you want to think about.

I want to give you a quote that I found. I was reading an article in *The New York Times* by Sarah Viren, and she had this wonderful quote that I pulled out, and here's the quote, I'm going to read it to you. "Sometimes when the house falls down, we move on and rebuild in other places, new structures made from the same materials but shaped to tell a different story." And that's where I think we are today. I think we have to take the old materials and we have to move on, and we have to rebuild in new ways and new places and tell new stories with new offers for a new world.

So, I'm happy to take questions, but there's two more things I want to let you know about. One is if you want any more detailed information on how to create your brand, you can go to Amazon and get my book *The Brand Mapping Strategy: Design, Build, and Accelerate Your Brand*, available on Amazon, but also I do a Thought Talk podcast with all kinds of interesting people talking about all of these topics, and you can find that Thought Talk podcast on Amazon.

The other thing is I always like to offer to anyone who's on my webinars a complementary consultation, where I'll actually take a look at your online business brand or your CEO brand, and then I will give you a quick 15 or 20-minute assessment of what I see about your CEO brand or your online business brand. No sales, no trying to get you to buy anything, just a quick assessment and give you a quick consultation. If you're interested in that, you can email me at karen@karenleland.com, or you can go online to karenleland.com, and you can send me a message.

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

All right. Well, that's it for me. Thank you so much for joining me. I'm really looking forward to hearing your questions and helping you figure out how you can create new offers for a new world in a post-COVID-19 world.

All right, well, thank you so much for sitting through the webinar, there's already a bunch of questions and I'm going to just start with some of the first ones, and go ahead and answer them. So, what a few people asked, is this webinar being recorded? Yes, it is being recorded, and it will be available with the slides on-demand on the Verizon site. So, yes, you can see this again or send other people to see it.

This is a really good point. Someone said, is COVID still happening? Can you explain post-COVID? So, when in the webinar when I talk about post-COVID what I mean is life before COVID and after COVID, because unfortunately, COVID, yes, is still happening, but to me, there was this line of demarcation, which is where COVID started, and then COVID is... after COVID started is post-COVID. It's not post-COVID meaning COVID's over. It means our world will never again be the same even though we're just still in the middle of it. So, that's what I mean by post-COVID.

This person asked, we've seen – and I'm just reading these for you guys. We've seen an uptick as a small fitness studio post-COVID, but everyone is afraid of shutdown again, and so what they're saying is safety is our number one concern for members, so how do we do selling results versus membership, which is their new approach? So, here's the thing about that. If you have a business and most businesses are like this, they can be instantly shut down again if something changes, you do have to figure out a contingency plan, you do have to figure out some scenario planning of what would you do if we're shut down again, what if it's a partial shutdown, what if it's a total shutdown? This is why I say that integration of virtual is really key for every single business because every business needs a contingency plan about how they're going to get to that.

All right, the next question. I find the virtual wine tasting fascinating. Me too, by the way. How did they do that? I can do exercise classes via Zoom, but did they ship the wine? So, here's what they did. They tell people – and I've seen this done with cooking too, by the way. They tell people, OK, we're going to taste these wines on this day, you can order them here, the people would order, they would ship the wine, and then at a certain time... just like the webinar, at a certain time, people got on the Zoom. There was the sommelier who took them to... said open your wine, do this, taste it, put in the chat room what you're hearing, give us your video response. So, they did it just like you would do a live tasting. The only difference is people weren't there physically together, they were there on Zoom, and I think it's really incumbent upon all of us as small business owners and CEOs to think about clever, interesting, fun ways that we can use virtual in our businesses. Even if tomorrow, even if there was... even if tomorrow we went back and everything was fine, and there was no more COVID and everything was OK, I still think we're in a world where those virtual options are really useful.

All right, this next question. I'm a small business owner and I don't have a PR person and need to watch expenses. How do you recommend that I get press for my small business without paying for a PR person? That is a great question. So, obviously, it's really useful to have someone like me or a PR person helping you with media, but if you don't have the budget for that, or you're too small, then one of the things I always tell my clients to do is go online and go to a site called Help a Reporter Out. HARO, Help a Reporter Out, you can just Google it. What you do is you sign up and it's free, and every day you will get, or a couple of times a day you will get... in your email box you will get reporters from TV, from radio, from podcasts, from print media, from blogs, from online, you will get reporters who are looking for sources that they can interview for stories. I've gotten myself – and it's all free. I've gotten myself and clients in almost every major publication you can think of using Help a Reporter. *The New York Times*, CNN, *Women's Day*, *Self*, all kinds of publications, podcasts, etc. So, that's a great thing to use. Now, I will tell you there is a trick, and by a trick, I mean there's a way to do it, there is a certain way you have to respond to reporters to even get a chance of them calling you. So, there's a particular... you have to follow a particular methodology that makes it more likely that a reporter will reach out to you rather than another, and if that's something you're interested in, just email me because I have some information on that.

OK, what social platform do you recommend, all or one over another? Does it depend on the business or the owner? So, the answer to that is it very much depends. For a while everybody was... this is part of... my next book, in *Drunk Marketing*, one of the chapters is about everybody has to think they have to be on all social all the time. TikTok is really hot right now, so I have people calling me going

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

how do I get on TikTok? Well, TikTok, depending on the business that you're in and the audience that you have and who you sell to, and how you sell, TikTok could be fabulous or it could be useless. So, part of it is really determining – part of not doing drunk marketing, but doing sober marketing is really determining where does your audience consume information? What is the most natural social media for your audience, your market, what you're trying to sell? Because the reality is you don't have to do all of them. Now, I'm not saying it's not good to have a presence on multiple sites, it probably is, but you don't have to be doing the same amount of depth or work on all of them, and you don't even have to be on all of them. You have to pick the ones that work the best for you.

So, for example, for me, Facebook is almost useless for me for clients. I have Facebook, we cross post from Instagram to Facebook, but it's not really very helpful for me. Twitter's OK, Twitter's pretty good for me, actually, for clients, but the best social media site for me for clients is LinkedIn. So, I put the most amount of my time and effort into LinkedIn, because LinkedIn is the place that has the biggest return for me for clients and think about it. My clients are CEOs of companies, they're professionals. They're not... I'm not a business to consumer market. I'm a business to business market. So, LinkedIn is the best one for me. So, you really have to think through where do your customers live, where do they consume information. This is where a little bit of the research comes in, and you can see where your customers are spending the most time.

All right, what is my... this is the next question. What if my personal reputation is sullied by past issues that have been rectified? So, I get this call a lot from people where they'll call, and they'll go Wikipedia says this or there's something negative about me. So, there's a couple of things. It may not be possible to remove something that you want to remove. It may be possible, or it may not. There's a whole lot of factors that go into that. I can't just say blankly without knowing the situation. What I can tell you is that the more new stuff that you create, and the more new things that get written about you, or the more new things that you generate, the further down it pushes the old stuff that might be negative. So, really one of the keys is to create new positive content or have other people create new positive content, videos, audios, blog posts, articles, things that you write, things that other people write, images. The more you do that, the more it pushes the old negative stuff down the road, and the more people have to scroll through pages and pages to find it. So, that's just one simple way to start to deal with that.

Someone said, where can we see the slides again? So, on the... as I said, Verizon will have this available for you to watch and the slides will be there.

This is the next question. Can I be on different social media platforms but positioned differently for each type of audience? Well, here's the issue. You do want to have a consistency of brand across your website and all your social pages forms. You don't want to look like one company or one person on one social media platform and one company and another person on another one. You do want a consistency. That doesn't mean that you can't customize or curate some different content for different social media platforms. It may be that your audience is slightly younger on one and older on another, or more business on one and more consumer on another. If that's the case, then yes, you can do some curation differences, but I always tell people, you want your message, your colors, your logo, your images, your feel, your tone, your language, you want it pretty consistent across your website and your social media, because that gives one picture of you as a clear brand rather than these confusing messages.

All right, this person said, I'm the owner of a small bakery, how do you recommend I develop a CEO brand for myself? So, it's really interesting. I do a lot of CEO branding, and some of it is for CEOs of billion-dollar companies, and some of it first is for CEOs of, like you said, small businesses, small bakeries, and there's really no difference in how you go about it. One of the keys in a CEO brand is you have to first think about what kind of CEO brand are you trying to create? Are you trying to create a CEO brand that's what I call consequential, meaning that you've done really big things and you want the world to know about these big things? Are you trying to create a CEO brand that's about charisma? You're a very charismatic person, it's your personality. Are you trying to create a CEO brand that's more about the results that you produce, or your thinking, your critical thinking? So, you have to think about, one, what do you want to be known for as the CEO, then you have to look at, in the world of social, how are you positioned? Do you have social media? Are you regularly posting on it? Are you creating thought leadership in your area? Are you becoming known as someone both within your industry and within the general business community at large and within your community, your consumer community, as someone

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

who's really a thought leader, and for a bakery, I don't know what that might be, I don't know what the specialty of your bakery is, it might be recipes that you create and a cookbook that you write as the owner of the bakery, it might be talking about different kinds of flowers. There's all kinds of things that you could do, but you have to think through a strategy for becoming that social CEO and having a CEO brand.

Another question about will the webinar be available. Yes, it will.

Yes, someone was asking me about the assessment. So, if you're the kind of business that would benefit from that, and some businesses are and some businesses aren't, but a lot are, what I suggest is if people want just an initial assessment of their CEO brand online, or your business brand online, if you email me at karen@karenleland.com and put in the subject line, "Verizon Assessment", that way I'll know you came from the Verizon program, then I'll do a quick look at how you look online either as a CEO or as a business. I'll send you a little questionnaire to fill out and then I'll schedule a quick call with you to tell you what I found out and give you some recommendations, or I'll email it to you. It just depends. So, that's how the assessment works. Thanks for asking.

Can I reshare my contact information? Yes, so you can reach me at Karen – that's K-A-R-E-N – at Karen – K-A-R-E-N – Leland – L-E-L-A-N-D – dot com. That's my email. You can find me at karenleland.com or you can find me at Sterling Marketing Group. Same company. Sterling, S-T-E-R-L-I-N-G, sterlingmarketinggroup.com. You can also look at my Thought Talk podcast. You can also find me on inc.com. I write a column there. So, if you just Google Karen Leland or Sterling Marketing Group, I should be pretty easy to find.

How do I perform my marketing research during COVID – survey or phone call? So, I do marketing research a couple of ways. One is I do a lot of online research, what's called social research, which is where I look at what people are actually saying in live time on Facebook, LinkedIn, Reddit, blogs, forums, etc. So, I do what's called social research. I also do a lot of online research. I do phone research, and then I do create surveys, so I do all of that. The only kind of research I'm not doing right now is focus groups. I'm not doing focus groups. I've done a little bit of focus groups by Zoom, but it's really hard to read people's body language, and I find that reading people's body language is critical for a focus group.

Someone said thank you so much. You're welcome. It's always a pleasure.

Appreciated my sharing. Do I have a case study for a travel company based on your findings? I'm sure I do, but I honestly can't think off the top of my head of ones. Write me and I'll see what I can find for you.

I'm in the special events industry and it's difficult to see the post-COVID portion. Yes, so here's the deal. I have a couple of clients in the events space and here's what they're all doing. They're all going to virtual. They're all realizing that everything they were doing live, they're going to have to start doing virtual, and they're all figuring out how to do conferences virtual, events virtual, and I have to be honest, they're actually doing a great job of it. I have three or four clients that are in that space, and they are doing a great job of it. So, what I would say is you need to completely figure out your virtual and then you can, when things go back, hopefully sooner rather than later, but you can then have the strength of the virtual to combine with the strength of the live.

Let's see. Help a Reporter Out. Yes, Help a Reporter. It used to be HARO, but if you just Google Help a Reporter, you'll find it.

Someone is asking my email address and my email address is karen@karenleland.com, and I have lots of programs that are audio and with workbooks on some of these different topics, how you use HARO, other things. So, obviously, please feel free to reach out. If there's questions, also, that didn't get answered, please feel free to reach out, I will try to put you into the right place.

All right, well, we have about a minute to go and, one, I just want to so thank everyone for your time and attention. I think people's time and attention is such a gift these days, and I really do appreciate it. Again, feel free to reach out to me at karen@karenleland.com. You can go to my Thought Talk podcast, you can go to my website, karenleland.com, or sterlingmarketinggroup.com, and then my book, *The Brand Mapping Strategy: Design, Build, and Accelerate Your Brand* is available on Amazon. I'm going to play a final video for you and thank you so kindly for attending. I hope to hear from you.

Andy Choi

Future-proof: How to create new small business offers for a COVID world.

And that's it for today's webinar. Our big thanks to Karen for sharing all these clear actions that small businesses can take to manage the trying times that we're all going through right now. Now in the Attachments tab, you will see that we are sharing the slides from today's presentation. You can check out the other webinars in this series on our BrightTALK channel page and be sure to tune in for our next webinar that's happening Tuesday, August 4. Jeffrey Shaw joins us as he teaches us the power of brand language. It should be a good one. We hope you'll join us again on August 4, and of course for all of our events in our Small Business Webinar Series. Thanks again for joining us. Have a good one. We'll see you soon.