**Essential PR Tools and Tactics - Elevate the Visibility of Your Business**

Welcome, everyone. I'm excited to be sharing my presentation with you today. This is the first time I do a presentation for SCORE National but I'm very active in the local chapters as Alexa mentioned. I do a presentation -- in fact I will be doing one in early June for SCORE -- for the SCORE chapter in Fort Lauderdale which is SCORE powered. Before I get started I wanted to thank Alexa for all her hard work and I wanted to thank all the people at SCORE for all they are doing does not only do they do wonderful work throughout the year but these last couple of weeks they've really done a tremendous job to get resources, the latest resources out to you in the fastest way possible. And not only is it national, but it's at all the chapters across the country which is more than 300. Most of those people who work at those chapters are volunteers. So if you take advantage of your SCORE chapters, please thank your mentors and your presenters for the work that they are doing because it's all on their time and it's all on their dying. So that being said, let's get started. The focus of the workshop is about elevating the visibility of your business. It's about being visible and being vocal. And looking at ways that you can do that and some of the tools and tips and I will offer tools and tips and I will give you examples of businesses that are doing a really good job. But all of the tools that I'm going to offer are tools that I've come across -- I may have used them -- I've used a lot of tools over the years. Some are good, some are not good and I'm just going to give you a list of tools and offer my tips that I hope will serve you well. And I'm going to give you some examples that I've come across, but none of the examples I give you are clients of mine. I want to be very transparent about that. Is really important to let you know that there are some really great examples and I know that you are probably seeing them every day just like I am. So let's get started. The whole idea is really to communicate more. I know that at the start of the COVID-19 crisis, in the middle of -- in mid-March when a lot of our communities across the country were going into lockdown, there were many, many businesses and nonprofits that did not want to communicate. There were many people and I heard from many of them myself that they were concerned about being viewed as using the crisis and taking advantage of the crisis to promote their business. And as the lockdowns have extended I think we've learned that it's okay to talk about how the crisis is affecting you and how the crisis has prompted you to adjust your business. And I think it's really important to talk about that. To talk about your business, to tell your business story. Not only to tell the story to your customers, but your potential customers. And to the community at large. It's important to share stories that you like and stories that you see about other businesses that you are seeing in your community. It's all about community now and it's really important to be really, again, vocal and visible. And it's important to speak up about the issues important to your customers and the vendors and potential customers because that's what you are thinking about. You -- they are thinking about their business, their bottom line, they are thinking about all the different concerns that are really relevant to us today, the financial concerns, the health concerns -- so be active in the conversation and so that people can tell that you are part of the community. So really get out there. It's really -- that's the most important point. Next up is really working your communications network. Most businesses have their own network of communications. Be it a website, some sort of social media which I hope all of you are doing something on social media especially now. Email marketing, LinkedIn is phenomenal. Personal page, business page -- I really recommend. And just look at how people are using LinkedIn to communicate about their business, it's especially ideal for B2B. And business groups and industry groups. Your associations, chambers of commerce, networking groups. Those are really key in terms of acquiring resources and maybe tapping into what's going on in your community and within your industry. So really start working your network of communication. And be active and those if you have not been. But as we all know, most of us spend many of our waking hours online now. So I'm hoping that you are already doing a lot of these. Next up, how are we going to get at them? We will cover a variety of things. First up is talking about stepping up outreach. As I mentioned working your communications network. Explore the market, we will talk about doing a little reconnaissance and looking at what other people are doing. Posting on social media, as I mentioned, you know, we are spending so much time online -- a lot of it is on social media so you might as well be active in it as well. We are going to talk about different tools and different tips on making that simple and easy and fun. Developing partnerships, I'm going to show you a couple of examples of businesses that are doing really phenomenal work by setting up tremendous partnerships. So that is really important. Enhancing your email marketing, if you have email marketing and you haven't been using it, now is the time to start using it. And if you have email marketing and you don't like your platform, really now is the time to switch. There are just so many tremendous deals, free trials, and discounts that are to be had and you might as well take advantage of it. And lastly we will talk about pitching media and doing media outreach, which is one of my specialties. That being said, let's get on to the first one which is really exploring the market, doing reconnaissance. Really I encourage you to look at what your competitors are doing right now. What are they -- what are they doing well? And what are they not doing well? What do you like about what they are doing? Are they communicating a lot? Are they posting on social? Are they sending out emails? And by the way if they are sending out emails, you should be on the email list and you should be getting those emails. How are other businesses in your industry handling the COVID-19 crisis? How are they handling their story? How are they adjusting and tweaking their story? And what I mean is their story is their messaging. How is their message about their business changed? How are other industries adjusting their message and their activities? And we are seeing so much adjustment and changes, we will go through a few of them in a few and in just a minute. I'm going to give you a really good example. But so many industries are finding new ways -- not only to communicate but to communicate how they've been adjusting. And in the process, they are creating some really amazing opportunities. So the key is, do the work, go out there. You are on social media already, reading the news, following tons of people. Emulate those you like and adopt a strategy. Similar strategies that you think can work well for your business. First up is a really great case study. Growers and farmers across the US now offer produce from field to plate or as some people call it from field to fork. They offer home delivery and shipping. As we know, around mid-March things change dramatically for all of us. Shopping for food became a big deal and it became a challenge. There were long lines, empty shelves, products that we used to be able to get without a problem suddenly became a problem. We all laugh about the toilet paper, but produce shelves were empty as well. And growers and farmers are finding that a lot of their produce just wasn't making it, wasn't getting to the market. Their distributors weren't getting there fast enough and they were having to throw away really wonderful, fresh produce. They also found out that people didn't want to go to the supermarket anymore. It was too challenging. They were either using home delivery service or they were signing up for ready to make meals that were shipped to their homes. They realized that maybe what they could do is do some of that direct shipping themselves and direct delivery themselves instead of going through a distributor. Lots of growers and farmers across the US are now going directly to the consumer. And that has been an amazing change for their industry. They are bypassing the distributor and creating a whole new audience for themselves and a whole new revenue stream. We are going to give you an example of one and you -- there's a lot of this in the media. This is an example of a story in the Boston Herald about a dairy farmer. Here in Miami, it's an example of how a group of South Florida growers and food industry businesses teamed up to create a company called Ricoh farm and what they basically are is they go directly to the grower. They provide -- they take the orders and they deliver it directly to people's homes. And they started doing this in April. They launched an Instagram page. They started Instagram ads on April 15th and you could see -- this is their feed on Instagram. They only have 48 posts since April 15th. They've been doing posts and Instagram stories. They have a following already, actually I think it's pretty good, 485 followers. And they are growing organically, ironically. They have a small but growing popularity. They do really great social and they are funding themselves. They are generating revenue for the farmers and growers that are involved in this venture and for the food industry. And we all know that restaurants and bars have been struggling tremendously. They've been extremely hard-hit so here's a group of people that teamed up to create out a new venture and are using social media. Right now they are only using Instagram and that's how I came across them. It's one of those people that refused to go to the supermarket, it's too much of a hassle and you know the concern, the health concerns are always there. And I was searching food delivery and I started getting these ads for farmers and growers who started home delivery services. And I became really impressed by the work that they started to do very, very quickly. So this industry adjusted pretty fast. And I guarantee you this is the kind of service that is going to last. It's not just for the time being. It will probably be long-term. So keep in mind, those adjustments and how this business, Rico Farm, is using social media to reach another market, another audience. And then you can use this as an example of what maybe you can be doing with your own business. Next up, the fitness industry. Gyms closed, I go to the gym, I love going to yoga classes and Pilates classes and I couldn't do that anymore. And if you check social media the fitness industry has adjusted in a tremendous, amazing way. They have Instagram Life workouts. IGT be workouts, Zoom workouts are popular and they are free and low-cost and we will talk a little bit about that. Facebook Live workouts. I know one national chain of studios, they do daily -- on a daily basis they do Facebook -- free Facebook Live workouts for their existing clients from about 5:00 in the morning to 8:00 at night. You can take a workout with an instructor anywhere in the country by tuning in on Facebook and these are regular classes. These are wonderful, wonderful classes. So they have managed to stay tremendously visible on a daily basis and people don't forget, there classes are packed. The fitness industry is taking advantage, -- offering free trials, they are offering online member discounts. They are doing -- all of this just so that you know, all of this amounts to PR. PR isn't just reaching out to media, PR is doing your social posts. It is email marketing. And it is obviously reaching out to media but it's everything combined. So this is tremendous PR for the fitness industry and if you have been paying attention and doing the workouts like I have you know what they've been doing and you can get some really tremendous -- take some really tremendous classes and I'm going to show you one company that does a really great job. So SweatyBetty is a workout and they are based in the UK but a big portion of what they've been doing is highlighting their partnerships. They partner with studios, instructors, and gyms across the US and across the UK. And what they've been offering are free workouts on social. You can find them on YouTube, you can find them on Instagram and on Facebook. You can take -- they have three classes throughout the week and then if you don't catch them when they are life you can catch them later, you can always pull them up. One of the things they do and they are really -- they've been smart about this. When they selected their partner instructor, they give them clothes to wear. They give them their line of close to wear during the class. So the instructor, let's say it's a yoga teacher in Omaha, Nebraska, with a really great following. This is one of the things they always choose somebody that has a really good following unsocial. They will give them some close and so the instructor will give a free workout on social media and talk about the close they are wearing and give a really great class. And so SweatyBetty is building its brand, enhancing its audience and working with partner instructors who will be wearing their clothes and showcasing their clothes and they are enhancing their audience. And for the instructor, for the yoga teacher, in Omaha, Nebraska, they are getting access to the SweatyBetty audience which if you pay attention where their followers are, they have 400,000+ followers on Instagram. So that instructor in Omaha now has the potential to reach 400,000 people and that is 400,000 possibly new customers and clients that they could be -- it could be part of their network. And I can guarantee you that it's working because I know people who have taken some of the pre-SweatyBetty workouts on Instagram and YouTube and they have started following those instructors and then those instructors now offer either their own free workouts or low-cost workouts on Zoom. So you can see where the partnership really works out for both SweatyBetty and for the instructors who sign up to work with them. So it really behooves you to team up with other people. Here's another example. So we have Jet Sweat Fitness, it's an online fitness program so you can go to the website and take the classes and they've been doing this for years. They've been made for this kind of opportunity. They've already had the workouts, they have the partnerships with studios and fitness instructors across the US. But they do charge a membership and so during this time one of the things they've done is they are offering free memberships. I saw them on a deal site called guilt.com and they were offering a free two month membership, that's amazing. Instead of spending $20 a month, you've got two months free of workouts. Of really wonderful, quality -- good quality workouts. And a wide variety of workouts. It's not just yoga, it's fitness, Pilates -- all kinds of workouts. And for their followers on social, they are offering tremendous discounts and they are also doing online free workouts where they are showcasing their partners. And on occasion what they are doing is driving traffic to their website which is always an essential and a key when promoting your business. But they are driving traffic to maybe lower cost workouts. So that instead of spending $30 for a one-time yoga class, you are spending $10 for a one-time yoga class. And sometimes they even ask the attendees to even offer how much they want to pay for a class. So they are still making money. They are looking for ways to generate revenue through the discount, through their free membership and partnership. And again this is another example of a business that's really working, not only are they working their network, they are working their partnerships and working different avenues to see how they can generate a revenue stream during a time when revenue streams have gotten shorter. And much smaller. So again, pay attention when I said earlier do a little reconnaissance. This is some of my reconnaissance. This is what I've discovered. Another industry -- taking advantage of -- really jumping on the situation and providing a tremendous amount of information all for free. The legal community, the legal industry has really embraced the thought of sharing resources and being helpful to their clients and potential clients. Attorneys across the US and law firms across the US are offering resources to their clients and to the public. They are gearing their resources to employers, two employees and families. Those are the three main groups they are trying to reach. Again they are doing it with free resources on their website, they are sending out emails, the legal industry to be frank has always been great at promoting itself. Really using email marketing and digital marketing to reach out to their client base and they do blogs and they are on Twitter and social. But they've added free Q&A Zoom meetings. This attorney, I came across here in South Florida who does a Zoom in at noon. He does it weakly. He has a weekly free Zoom where he invites people to come and ask questions about their business, about healthcare issues. Just about anything that really -- especially linked to COVID-19 but he welcomes all kinds of questions. The whole idea from his perspective and from other attorneys who are doing this is that by showcasing their expertise, they can possibly gain a client in the future. If the client -- if you are sitting in in a Q&A and you like what you hear you might reach out when you need an attorney. So I mean the idea has worked well for him, and his zooms are really really popular. He gets a lot of people. And I haven't sat in on his but I did sit in on another attorneys Zoom who was recommended to me by a friend. And I mention it because that's one way they are getting people to come and join their Zoom, and read their resources. They are working their network but their network also includes clients, friends and family. So they have asked a lot -- a lot of attorneys and firms are asking their clients are friends and family to share information, to share their resources with their friends and family and clients, and to share their meetings. So don't be afraid to tap your clients for a little help getting the word out. They are your ambassadors. Those of the people who know your business really well because they work with you. And then your friends and family, I mean, your friends and family hopefully want to help you and you hopefully want to help them. So why not share information just as a friend of mine did about her attorney? And I actually took -- I sat in on her attorneys Zoom and it was really, really good. So don't be afraid of tapping your clients, asking friends and family, send them the email is a please share and encourage people to attend. I will tell you that in all these three examples, and the information that they are communicating, it's really good content. We are not talking like bad, you know, or work that hasn't been done well. They are offering really great content and that's why people keep coming back. And that's another key, is really offering the content and taking time to offer good content. So let's just recap just a little bit about some of the examples I gave you. How are they getting the word out? They are active on social, they are using Facebook Live, Instagram Live, IGTV, YouTube . They are offering free classes, consultations, free consultations, attorneys always love to give free consultations. Trial memberships and discounted classes. I mean, as I mentioned, great to be able to take a $30 yoga class and only pay $10. People feel like they're getting a deal and they are actually getting a deal and they are saving money and the fitness instructor is actually making money and that's always a good thing. We want everyone to do well. People are stepping up their email marketing, like I mentioned, especially the legal industry law firms and attorneys are great at email marketing, they are great at blogging, they have stepped it up and so you can learn from that. And what's great about how they use email marketing, they are not just selling their services. The key is really never to be doing the hard sell, the key is to offer great content, as I mentioned, they are offering great content and that's the cell. The cell is the content. So they are hoping that you will come back for more great content. Lastly, the partnerships, it leads to cross promotion and leveraging audiences. And I think we can all think about people who we can work with that can help us do that. And so I'm hoping that you will see some of these examples and use them. Okay, so we recapped just a little and now let's -- it's a really good time as we are thinking about different ways of communicating and reaching and stepping up our communications. It's also a good time to reassess your audience. Who is your audience? You probably might have more than just one group of people that you target to your business and through your communications. So it's a good idea to look and sit down and really map out who that audience is and make sure you are still reaching the right people. And then how that audience might have changed because of the COVID-19 crisis and how that change might effect us moving forward as we transition out of lockdown. So again, is it men or women? What age group? Ethnicity? Is it geographic? What is their education level? Almost draw a persona, the characteristics of a person to represent the audience. Or the audiences that you are trying to reach. And then think about how those audiences and their needs have changed over the last couple of months. Because that will really help you target your communications. And it will really help you determine what social media channels you are going to be on and what you are going to focus on. And it will really determine the content in the messaging of those channels that you share. And I know I've been talking a lot about social media and email marketing and digital marketing, but I just want to mention one thing. I know that there's a lot that we can all do on our own and I'm all about do-it-yourself, DIY, but if you are doing it yourself which is already a stressful endeavor, you can pare it down. It's okay. You don't have to be on all social networks. And mind you all social networks don't work for all businesses either. I know people that are just on LinkedIn, that will only focus on LinkedIn because they do B2B and they know that's where their customers are. So as you reassess your audience, reassess those tools that you have in your wheelhouse for communications. Should you be on Facebook? Should you be on Instagram or Twitter? Actually we are going to talk a little bit more about Twitter because I really like Twitter for a variety of reasons, but you don't necessarily have to be using -- tweeting to be using Twitter. And should you be on LinkedIn? And there's the other ones like tick-tock and Snapchat. Should you be blogging? Really take a look at what you've been doing and see if you need to still be doing all of that or if you can pare that down and just really hone in on the ones you think will make you more effective with your message and with what you are communicating. Okay. Next up I want to just recap a little bit about partnerships. Partnerships, as I explained, happy, really important. The growers and farmers are teaming up with the food industry to get food to the end consumer. That's a partnership, those are partnerships that they've created that will help -- that actually have helped many create new revenue streams and new audiences. So that is what they are communicating. As SweatyBetty, the fitness industry -- look how they've created partnerships where they can leverage each other's strengths. You know? What strengths -- if you are looking at a potential partnership what can you bring to the table and what could that potential bring to the table? And then how can you leverage those to enhance your messaging and become more visible? You want to work and you want it to work for you and you want it to work for them as well so it's important that it works for both of you. And what will that partnership look like? How are you going to be sharing information? How are you going to be leveraging your resources to help them? So I actually have an example of a partnership that I really like. I don't have a visual for it. I'm just going to talk it through with you. But this is one I thought -- and it's a nonprofit partnership. I love nonprofits, I love working with nonprofits. Because you do so much good. So when the COVID-19 crisis started, when schools -- school districts shut down the schools and people went to distance learning, it meant that a lot of kids weren't being fed. They weren't eating breakfast, and lunch at school and for many kids in the US, it means they are not eating. It is sad to say, but childhood hunger in the US and across the globe is a really big deal. It's really, really a big issue. So [ Indiscernible ] and I have no affiliation with either of them. They teamed up to [ Indiscernible ] it's a wonderful campaign where they've gotten celebrities to read children's books and it's recorded and posted on social media. They have a great following on Instagram, they have over 270,000 followers I think and again it is called Save with Stories. You can find them on Facebook and YouTube as well. They are leveraging their resources, right? They are leveraging their contacts and entertainment, leveraging each other's social following. They are leveraging their resources to raise money to stamp out hunger and childhood hunger and fund food banks across the US. It's a beautiful partnership and it's really raising money and helping families and individuals get the food they need. And that's really a wonderful goal. And a little side story about this, are the celebrities that are signing up to read the books. Celebrities are not walking the red carpet right now unless it's in their home, so they are getting lots of visibility too and I bet you at the start of this campaign which is back in March, you know, save the children and No Kid Hungry, they were tapping all of their contacts in the entertainment industry to see who would read a children's story. On social media but now I bet you they are getting calls from celebrities that want to read because it's -- they need the visibility too because if you are not visible when you are a celebrity you cease to be a celebrity. And the works start to stop so it benefits a wide variety of people, and some people probably don't care about the celebrities benefiting but I guarantee you celebrities are viewing it as a great opportunity to stay relevant. And that's another point that I haven't thought out is that you want to stay relevant. And by being visible and vocal, you are staying relevant and that's really, really important to your business. And to enhancing your business in the eyes of the consumers and in the eyes of your audience that you are trying to reach. So I parked on partnerships a lot because I think they really, really do work and especially now there is a really good role for them. And for you to use them. Okay, so a lot of what I've talked about has been about social media, really it being active on social media, being vocal, creating partnerships that you can use on social media and social media, if you haven't been active on it you need to start now because everybody, as I mentioned, is spending almost all of their waking hours on social. And on their computers. The social media can be a chore. I admit its work and you have to work it. But you can make it easy and so I highly recommend -- I'm a big proponent of using a social media scheduler. They are wonderful, they provide stats, they track likes, follows and chairs; they will save you time. You can schedule your post, days, months, in advance. If you know that in the fall you have a campaign you can already start planning that social campaign to match your retail campaign now and have it ready to go. So it's a really -- there are really great tools and they are really wonderful tools out there. And they are also really low cost tools. Let's look at a few of them. So as I mentioned there are tons of social schedulers out there. There are dozens of them. You can Google it, search on Bing and Yahoo and you will find dozens of social media schedules. These are just some . I have used some of these. SproutSocial is really great and more on the expensive side. There is Loomly and I know people have used that. Constant contact is an email marketing platform that a lot of us are familiar with but many email marketing platforms like ContactContact are offering social media schedulers. And that might be a way to go and to keep a lot of what you do in one place. So keep that in mind and I'm going to mention another kind of one-stop shop in a little bit. Hootsuite is phenomenal. They are low-cost, they have great analytics , and you can see all of your feeds, newsfeed, mansions and retweets and scheduled posts all on one screen. As I mentioned it's a really great tool, it is almost becoming one of the industry standards. Buffer is phenomenal. It's also very low-cost . And some of these schedulers will offer -- are offering now extended trial dates. So you can do one week for free, two weeks for free and maybe even a month for free. Some of them are offering free scheduling if you only have a few accounts that you work with. So it's a great time to invest in a scheduler because the investment will be small. You are not going to have to spend as much. I mean, you know, obviously the different schedulers have different benefits and I do recommend that you shop around. But there are some really great deals. And maybe you can even talk them down because I know they are -- just as all of us have been mindful of our bottom line, so have a. So they want customers. It is a buyers market as I like to say. Another key point as you look at enhancing your visibility and being more effective as you enhance your visibility is really get to know your followers. If you are on Facebook, check out the Facebook insights tab. It's phenomenal. You can learn so much about the people who follow you on Facebook. You can find out what's the best time to post, when they see your post the most, how many people like it, what kind of content they like, what they don't like. Really get to know your Facebook insights. The historical data doesn't go back too far. It's about a month or so, but it is chock-full of great information and most business owners have studied their customers. You have studied your audience of customers whether it's another business or the end consumer and you know their characteristics. Do the same with your social media audience. Get to know who they are and what their habits are and see if you can try to match up your customer base with who buys your product and buys your service, and then you can try to get them to be your customer and your audience that follows you on social media. So you can do that by looking up, like I said, Facebook insights, Google analytics are phenomenal and you can get hooked on reading your Google analytics for your website. So if you've never done that, do it now. If you have a webmaster who managers your website, tell them you want to see your Google Analytics as soon as possible. And your post engagements, if you are using a scheduler, all of them have analytics. You should be looking at that and I encourage you to look at that on a regular basis. Next up, if you are on social media -- which of course you should be -- there are dozens of apps and platforms to help you. Dozens of them. Apps like -- these are just three but we all know the app store on our phones are packed full of wonderful tools. Many of them are free. And maybe just for a few extra dollars a month they want you -- you get an enhanced version of the app. But there are platforms you can use on your desktop and on your laptop. For example, Canva is a graphics app , a graphics platform. There's also pick and a couple of other graphic platforms that are excellent and you can create some really eye-catching graphics for social media and for your email marketing and even for flyers if you are making flyers and banners and signs. Canva , PicMonkey and others are tremendous tools. Magisto is a video making out, it's easy to use and they have wonderful templates, you can add music and do all kinds of things using it. It's not hard to use at all. I've used it and I recommend taking a look at it. And it has a free trial that's worth it. That's how I learned about them. I signed up for a free trial. And then Ru is actually an Adobe product. It is premier rush, it's a video making platform. All of these that I've mentioned have mobile apps that go with them and really you can just use premier rush on your phone. You don't even need to use it on your computer and you can make some very sophisticated looking videos and I'm going to recommend that you look at World Economic Forum. They make these tremendous videos. You can find them on all the different social channels and when you see the videos you will know what I mean. You can make videos that look like the ones that the World Economic Forum has on a daily basis. And totally transform your message. And so I highly encourage you to check out their videos and social feeds. They do wonderful social work. World Economic Forum is an NGO and they work obviously worldwide and they do a really, really wonderful job. But their videos are worth taking a look at. Next up is email marketing. Most businesses are doing it. If you are not doing it you should be and I'm just going to give you a few examples of some email marketing platforms that are available. We've got constant contact, MailChimp, Save to Stories and you can do just about all kinds of digital marketing just from that one place, Hubspot. Send in blue is an interesting new platform. They do email marketing and they also have text messaging. Very low cost text messaging and they also have a pay-as-you-go function so you don't have to pay for a membership. You can pay just as you go, for text messaging they have pay-as-you-go. For email marketing it's how many -- you can set up different kinds of payment structures. They are very bare-bones, but if you are just getting started might be a good place to go because they are also low-cost. And then there are dozens more. I just mentioned a few that are among the most popular and most recognized. But shot the deals. As I mentioned, shop the deals. There are so many deals out there that you could be taking advantage of especially now. Okay. As I mentioned, shop the deals. Some of the deals we haven't talked about and I think are really important are the social media ad deals. Facebook and Instagram are offering credits. So if you want to, you know, get started on social media ads, now is the time. You can get some credits. If you have been doing it, you probably have already seen the credit available to. Google ads has made available 300 -- $350 million for existing advertisers. If you are not an existing advertiser you don't have access to this right now but if you have been advertising on Google, this is available and I think the rule is you have to have been an active advertiser within the last year. And of course I mentioned the email marketing deals which there are tons of them that you can take advantage of and I thank you can also negotiate probably on that as well. Online -- consider online newspaper ads and snail mail mailers. The mailers are making a comeback. And they are affordable. Consider -- because more people were spending more time at home we are actually reading our mail more. Not just our email, our actual mail from the mailbox. So people are having success with the mailers and you might be able to get some really good deals in your community especially if you do a lot of local -- if your audience is more local. I provided you tons of resources and one of the things I always -- is a determining factor for me when I choose an app or I choose a platform's customer service. Besides the cost you have to keep in mind your time and your effort. For me it makes a big difference if there's a person I can call, a customer service number and there are hours of operation. If I'm working on something on the weekend and I get stuck, I want to be able to call someone or chat online with someone. So I recommend when you are looking at these different platforms be it for social media or email marketing or any other service that you are looking at, check out their customer service because that's just part of what you pay for is that and if they've got great customer service and the ones that do it well do it very well. It's worth the money. I will say you are saving yourself a lot of time, effort and anxiety. And nobody wants that. We are already adding stations anxious and we don't need to add to our anxiety, struggling and making a newsletter. It's not worth it so check their supports. Again check to see if they have a number, if they have online chat, those are wonderful and they are quicker than phone numbers and if you're going on the low-end and you're not spending a lot of money, find out what the turnaround time is for email support. I know an email marketer out there that's really great and for their paid service they've got better customer service and if you choose their free version, all you have is an email and you don't know when that email is going to be replied to. So keep that in mind when you are doing work. Next up, always try to find ways to make things better for you. One of the things I highly recommend is hiring someone to help you out and it doesn't have to cost a lot of money. That extra support doesn't have to be pricey. Look for websites that showcase freelancers that specialize in what you need. These are some of the many sites for social media and marketing freelancers and PR professionals. Freelancer.com has been around for a long time, so has Fivver.com. You can go to Google, or Yahoo or whatever and search freelancer and fill in the bring. Freelancer PR professional. You can find freelancers that can help you with any of these projects and use -- you set the price and use at the budget. So again it's a buyers market. There's great support and really talented work out there, and these sites are full of really wonderful, talented individuals that can help you at a very low cost and again I highly recommend you at least look into it. Lastly, and I know we are coming up on the end of the hour but I'm going to try to get through this as quickly as possible. Is reaching out to media. I'm going to go to the next slide to cut some time. What I do a lot for my clients among some of the other stuff we've discussed is doing a lot of PR for them in terms of media outreach. And this is something that maybe you can do yourself and it shouldn't scare you. It doesn't have to scare you. Actually it can be easy and fun, so here is how you do this. It starts with writing press releases, press releases are great and I will show you how you can use your press releases. But writing press releases, pitching media, using Twitter. I mentioned before that Twitter is really a phenomenal tool. It's a phenomenal tool for mowing -- for really listening to what people are talking about, people within your industry, and maybe what they are saying about you? It's always a great listening tool. So you can open a Twitter account and never tweet but you can be a voyeur so to speak and see what other people are talking about. And I will tell you all media are on Twitter so that's why Twitter is a very good tool. And I will talk about that in a second. And then I want you to consider using a press release or several press release distribution services and we will talk about that. Writing a press release, you can use a press release template. There are many online. All you have to do is search it, press release template, and you will find tons of them. When you write a press release -- and I have a sample one that I found when I just Googled it and it was pretty simple. I will show you and a second. You need to include your email and sell phone number and you put that on your press release. Hyperlink to your website, at the bottom and I will show you on the template and an about us, it's also called a boilerplate but the boilerplate really is information on your website which I hope all of you have. And list your social media and hyperlink each of those channels. You want that press release to really be a reflection of your business and have different ways that media can reach out to you and the last part as I mentioned, hire a freelancer because writing a press release, you don't want to spend hours poring over writing a press release when you can hire someone for maybe -- I don't know -- $50 or $75 who's done it before and can do it quickly. It really shouldn't take more than an hour to two hours to write a press release. Here is just one that I came across when I did a quick search of a press release template and I thought this was a pretty good example of one. You can see there is a contact name, phone number, email address and again the phone number has to be a number they can reach you and you will answer at all times. Same with the email address. You want your logo there, you have to show your logo. For immediate release so the person receiving it knows it's a press release. A headline and your lead, the lead is the first paragraph. I come from journalism, newspaper background. I'm a firmer newspaper recorder reporter and that first sentence should include the who, what, why, when and how. Whatever you are writing about and whatever you are communicating. Another reason for really recommending a freelancer to help you with this is because they've done it before. So all of these things, the who, what, why, when and how -- they can get that done and talk you through it and help you map that out so you don't spend an inordinate amount of time working on that. But notice in that lead it has city and state. When you write a press release you always want to put the city and the state where it's coming from. Let's say you are the yoga instructor from Omaha that I mentioned earlier who now has a tremendous partnership with SweatyBetty. That's a perfect example of why you would want a press release. She or he could write a press release about their new partnership with SweatyBetty and in that city and state they would put Omaha, Nebraska. That is why that's there, it's pretty much an industry-standard. And then you have a couple of paragraphs, a quote -- you always want to include a quote. And at the bottom it says boilerplate. You will get this in your deck and you can look over it a little more quickly and not as quickly as I just gone through. But it's a good example. It's very basic but press releases are very basic. And they should be. Using your press release, you can send it to media, you send it to a distribution service which we will talk about in a second. Post on your website, you can send it out via email marketing to your customers, to your subscribers. You can use it as fodder for your social media. You can post something on Facebook or Twitter, Instagram -- Instagram you can't really link to directly but you can put the little URL in your bio. You can tweet it out as I mentioned. You can tweet something out and link to your press release on your website. You always want to link people to your website or where you want them to go. So this is a great opportunity for posting something on your website and then using it as social content to get people to go to your website. So these are how -- the uses of your release and it's great to have and it's a great tool for communication. And for messaging for your business. A press release distribution service, why would you want to use it? It generates online visibility, generates lots of web traffic and it generates great SEO -- search engine optimization which is online visibility for your business. Yes, media will see it depending on the platform you are going to use. It depends on how many media members but really a press release distribution service will do this in a great way. An added benefit, when you use a distribution service you can also generate tweets which is wonderful, and other social content. If people see your release they might tweet it out, might post it on their social and hopefully you will get the analytics for what you sent out from the platform you've chosen. We will go through a few platforms right now. About the cost, the cost of a distribution service really varies but it depends on the number of words you are using, the distribution area or distribution group. You can distribute to a geographic area, you can distribute to an industry, and use of graphics and videos. Those will be the determining factors of how much you spend. Really quickly, some distribution services. There is free and paid and by far the best paid is PRlog.org. It's not pretty but is very effective. For a free service it's great. It's a global service can any that's used worldwide and it's good. Even though it looks antiquated, it really does work. It will generate what you want. You want some online visibility. It will generate a couple of links, a couple of good links and if someone searches you online, hopefully, your press release should pop up. Paid services, there tons of them. You can search press release distribution service and see what you get. Online publications like Mashable will always do articles on the best platforms for different uses and they do one on press release distribution services. When you Google any -- search for any platform and stories that pop up recommending different platforms, just check the dates and make sure it's as recent as possible. If it's 2020 that's ideal, if it's 2019, that's great, if it's 2018 it's already a little too dated but search them and you can get a list of current, popular distribution services, these are some of the most popular. PRWeb, PR Newswire, Globenewswire, -- I came across recently iCloudNewswire and they are based out of South Florida out of the Miami area where I am. And I thought they were interesting. They are global and AccessWire is another one I found recently that looked really interesting. And as I mentioned there are dozens more but the key with a distribution service, especially if you are -- check their analytics and get a sample report of a press release that has been sent out. You want to see how they report the analytics and you also want to know what kind of customer service -- if you are paying for somebody to send out a release, you want some good customer service reports and a lot of these will do -- read over your release and tell you if there's a problem or a mistake and they will help you corrected. So that is an added benefit for them. Really quickly because I want to get your questions, contacting media. You can do everything but contacting media and you've done a really good job. You don't have to contact media when you write a press release. But if you want to go the extra step and contact media, you are going to need to map out the media you want to contact and so if you want to reach local, national -- and online. I have a great story about industry media but I don't know if I would be able to have time to tell it so I'm going to wait and see if we have time later and I will tell you why industry media is really great. I have a great example. So you map out the media that you want to contact and now you have to do a little leg work, right? As I mentioned all media are on Twitter so you can see -- if you know the reporter -- is a variety of ways of finding the media. Go to their website, go to the media outlets website. If it's of TV station check out their site and find out if you can get the emails and phone numbers or the reporters and editors that you want to reach. Same thing with newspapers and online publications and magazines. They all have websites. See if that information is on their website. Follow them on Twitter. As I mentioned, you don't need to tweet to have a Twitter account but go to Twitter. Every media person I know is on Twitter. Their editors are on Twitter. The photographers are on Twitter. I'm telling you, if there is someone that works in media they are on Twitter and that's why Twitter is phenomenal. It's a great resource for just this alone. Research those emails and phone numbers, and then you will email your pitch and attract your press release and call them up for a follow-up and hopefully you get them on the line and hopefully they like your story. But there's actually more to that pitching process but this is just a quick recap and lastly, as I mentioned, you might want to hire a low-cost freelancer to help you do this because chances are they've already done it. So keep that in mind and that's it. I've gone through very, very quickly a wide variety of methods for you to elevate the visibility of your business. Hopefully I've given you some examples, some tips and tools that will really come in handy. And hopefully now I will hear from you. You've heard from me, this is me, Little Fish Media, based in Miami but I work everywhere especially now. My email, you can find me on LinkedIn and Twitter. And I want to hear from you so I'm turning it back over to Alexa so we can get your questions.

Okay, great. Patricia, thank you so much. We will go ahead and move into the Q&A portion of this webinar and we will do our very best to address as many questions as possible in the time remaining. We have been receiving are receiving really great questions from everyone so I want to go ahead and jump right on in. So we can utilize this time to the best of our ability. Patricia, [ Indiscernible - multiple speakers ] -- go ahead.

Yes, this first question comes to us from [ name unknown ] and they are asking as a start up business which plans to open in the fall, how do you suggest we promote our business since we don't have any product to sell or experience to share? What type of content should we be sharing?

Well I think you want to establish that content now, create the foundation. So build the website, start planning and building the website. Set aside the social media channels that you want to use, and start doing some reconnaissance before you even start communicating, start doing reconnaissance on the industry and on your competitors. And from there -- and the reason actually -- or question is so relevant because I talked to someone yesterday in the same situation. One of the things we talked about was really mapping out who her audience is, who that persona, the ideal customer is so do that little practice of creating the persona for the audience you are trying to reach. And also really nail the message. What is your business about? What is the -- what is it that your business values? What is the value you want to get across? And that will help you then create the foundation that you are going to build your social media and your messaging around. And once you have those different elements in place, if you don't have them in place yet, that will then serve as a jumping off point for the content you will be using. So I don't know if I answer the question, but I think you need those elements first before you even start communication. I hope that helped.

Okay. Our next question, this comes to us from Keith and we have had many audience members asking this same time of question around your competition and how can you tell what your competition is doing, how do you know where they post? Any suggestions on that?

The first place to go is their website. Hopefully they shared their social media posts -- their social media channels on their website. Not everybody does but they should. So let's say your competition doesn't put the little social media icons on their website. Then you can just Google them or being them or search Yahoo. The name of the company and Facebook, the name of the company and Twitter. The name of the company and Instagram and if they are on any of those channels their pages will pop up. I do that all the time as well when I'm looking for somebody and I don't have time to really go to their website and search for their social media. I will just pop their name in the Google bar and put and Twitter, and Instagram and you will likely find them there. That is the quickest way to do it.

Okay. The next question is from Jodi and Jodi says she had a colleague tell her she looks desperate because she's posting every day. [ Indiscernible - multiple speakers ] and then we've had other audience members asking how much should they be posting? How frequently? Can you talk about that a little bit?

Right, I don't think it's so much about the frequency but what you are posting. The content you are posting so Jodi, it's all about engaging the audience. So it's about providing great content. And I mentioned before when I use SweatyBetty as an example, they are providing great content. They are posting all the time, everyday, countless times a day. So it doesn't matter if you are posting a lot but they are posting great content. They are not selling their product, they are posting the content. Consider the 80/20 rule. 80% of good content and 20% selling. If you go to SweatyBetty, and Jodi, I want you to go there and look at their Instagram and you will notice that every so often they will post about the clothing they sell. Every so often on their Instagram story you will see a post about the clothing they sell, but in between those posts are tons of other posts about their partners, their instructors that are doing the free online classes. They are sharing information about health, wellness and fitness that has nothing to do about buying close. So really it's the quality of the post and the content. So don't always be selling, if you are always telling people are going to get really tired of the message. But, yeah, if you are engaging and sharing information that you think your customers are going to enjoy, then it doesn't matter if you post all the time. It shouldn't.

Okay, Patricia, the next question comes from Stephen. I think it ties in well with Jodi's question. Regarding your posting, Stephen wants to know if you should tell your story first? Or do you promote your product and service first?

Well I think -- I mean it's one in the same. I think you can tell your story -- I think you do both. I don't think one comes first. I think, you know, when you are posting on social and talking about it it's a conversation. So you tell a little bit about what your story is, you tell about your product, you engage on information about other issues that are important to your customers. But I think you should do both of them. I don't know if one outweighs the other. I don't think one does outweigh the other. I think it's always in a manner in which you tell that story, you know, whether it's a moving story, whether you are fundraising for your business and you set up a fundraising page. As I said before, with Jodi's question, it's the 80/20 rule. You want to engage with good content and the 20%, you want to sell your story and share your story and you should be able to share your story. It's a balance and I hope I'm answering this question well enough, you know, like I said, you have to get a sense of what people like and what will give you that sense is kind of the response you get from people. Are they liking those posts? I guarantee you if no one is liking a post and they are not sharing it or commenting on it, it's not the best post. And that's okay because we've all been there and it happens a lot. But if you are on Facebook and sharing a post and it's getting a really great response, I will tell you one good clue, that tells you that you are doing a good job. Facebook wants you to boost that post, Facebook will only tell you to boost a post that's already doing well. And that is the only kind of post you should be boosting. So let the content be your guide, you know? Post something and see what kind of response you are getting and if you are not getting a good response then don't try that method, don't try that kind of post. Try something else. But the analytics will be a really good determining factor, and also look at when most people are visiting and looking and seeing your post as well. Because you might just be posting at the wrong time. So check your Facebook, if you are on Facebook, check your analytics. And Instagram does the same thing, by the way, if you have a business page it will tell you when most people are seeing your post and at what time and if they are men or women and what age group. Let the content be your guide.

The next question comes to us from Neil and he is asking about the platforms, one of the best platforms to write articles or share information that will boost the visibility and credibility of your business. Is Facebook the only one, or are there others?

You mean like social media? It varies because I mentioned at one point that not all social channels work for all businesses. If you are an accountant on Instagram that might not be the best place for you. Really, it's not visual, your job is a visual, you can put up all these really great quotes, inspiring quotes but you can only go so far with that and we all know that. If we are on Instagram, you kind of get tired of those. But you could be on LinkedIn and that is where you should be. LinkedIn has great B2B, great for reaching other professionals. So it really depends your business and your message. And based on those factors, you can really determine the channels that really will work best. Like I said, if you are an accountant you might want to be -- you might want to be active on LinkedIn and you might also want to be active within your local chamber and networking groups because that's another avenue that you should consider and participate in. The same thing for a restaurant, especially now, you know, you might want to be on Pinterest which is one that I never mentioned because it's not my favorite because of the time-consuming element of it but people who love Pinterest will spend over an hour on Pinterest on a daily basis. So if you are a restaurant, designer, clothing designer, if you are an interior designer -- anything highly visual, you want to be on those platforms that are very visual like Pinterest and Instagram. So it depends on what your businesses and then you can go from there and you can also check to see how people within your industry and what social channels they use and what social channels seem to be working well for them. So if you have a competitor and they are on Facebook, take a look at how well they do and what their engagement is, how often they post it if it's working for them?

Okay. The next question comes to us from Virginia. Virginia says that she is starting a business soon and we are developing new products that need to be protected until they are ready to release. So Virginia's question is how do I communicate more in this situation?

Well that -- if you've got a website already -- I mean again without knowing what you have in place right now, I'm just going to make an assumption that you have a website. And you communicate about maybe what service that product serves, what solution your product -- I don't know if I'm saying this correctly. How you are solving someone's problem with your product, so you might want to talk about the problem solving element that your product solves. So it really depends on what the product is but you can talk about, you know, what prompted the creation of the company. What industry that you are in and what you are hoping to impact with your product and with your service. I think you can do that. I think you can do that without actually showcasing the actual product. Let's say you are in cleaning, you work in industrial cleaning. I don't know why I came with up that and you are creating a new industrial cleaner for supermarkets. And it is patented and trademarked and you are not ready to go to market and sell it but you want to be talking about the issues, the cleaning issues related to supermarkets. Health issues that are related to that industry, and the problems that your product will help solve. So I think you can do that, like I said, without actually having the actual product.

Okay. Patricia, the next question here is from Mary. I'm actually going to combine two questions here. From Mary and Charlene. Mary is asking if you can talk a little bit about how teaming up in order to offer more free stuff -- how is that helpful to a business. Mary does mention that people love free stuff but in her experience most people don't continue on. So then the second part from Charlene is, then can you talk about how to approach someone about a partnership? Maybe we can tie that in?

Right, free stuff is great and I mentioned how the free fitness has been phenomenal. And the interesting thing and I think she brings up a really good point is that people love free stuff and there's a lot of free stuff right now. How do you make that -- how do you extend that to page stuff is really about the quality and so without knowing what that stuff is, if it's a service like fitness, people will keep coming back because it's really good, right? They are finding the value in that service. And that value will extend to paying. So you could -- again without knowing what the product is or service is, you could walk them through slowly maybe instead of going from free to paid, maybe not, you know, from zero to $100 but walk them through a smaller increasing amount to see if they will stick with you. Again, it would be helpful to know what the product or service is but I think you can do that. And if someone doesn't want to stick with you, after you let go of the free product, then let them go. They are not the kind of, you know, client that you want. The client that you want is the one that's going to recognize the value of your service. And that value is going to show. As I mentioned, I don't know if I mentioned this but in SweatyBetty I came across a yoga instructor I really liked. I took a yoga class and then started following this individual, and I will keep going back for this individual's class and I know that I will likely pay. I don't know how much I will pay but I know I will pay. And the key is finding out how much people are willing to pay when you transition to the paid, you know, to the paid service or product. How much are they willing to pay because I think they are willing to pay, it's just finding that price point that they are going to be comfortable with and that will be comfortable not only for them but also for you and your bottom line. I'm not sure if I addressed the second part of that question, if you could repeat it, Alexa?

Sure. This came from Charlene asking if you could talk about how to approach someone about a partnership?

I think if you find someone that you want to partner with, call them up. Email them. I really think -- to see how open they are and how accessible they are but just call them up. And present yourself and an idea that you have. Have the idea already mapped out in your mind or on a piece of paper. And I would also complement them. Obviously if you want to partnership with somebody it's because they are doing something right. So highlight the good stuff. Highlight all the good stuff that the company is doing right and all the good stuff that you are doing right. And showcase what you are bringing to the table and how what you are bringing to the table will help them and help them enhance their work as well. So I really do think, yes, definitely play up what you are doing right and how you can be of help to them and they know what you're hoping to achieve and then you can talk to them eventually about how they can help you and how you are helping each other in the end.

Patricia, we've had several questions come in around the social media scheduling or schedulers. One of the questions here was letting us know -- I use social media scheduling but when I use it my posts get less likes, views and engagement. Do you happen to know why that maybe?

No, I don't. I come across this as well. I know other people are less inclined to use social media schedulers for that reason. I, you know, I think the good of a social media scheduler outweighs that. I don't know why -- I don't know. It could be something in the technology. It could be something in the technology that really affects the scheduling. But I don't think it's that -- had not found it to be that significant, especially because so many people use them. The predominant -- predominately companies are using schedulers because it is just so much more efficient for doing work. For the work that you are doing. So that's a good question about -- but I think it has to do with the technology and the process of pushing the content onto a social network. There could be something -- Facebook and Instagram, which is the same company, they have put hurdles in place for people and schedulers. And that could be part of the issue. It could be that the channel and social media network is trying to discourage a third-party from accessing their system, and it probably is a lot of that. I'm sure Facebook wants you to use their scheduler as opposed to using one that you can pay. You can't schedule on Instagram. I don't know why they've never instituted that. I think a lot of people would use it. But I guarantee you it's probably from the channel itself and the network that's putting a lot of barriers -- I will say for LinkedIn, one of the things that people complain about LinkedIn is you can use a scheduler for LinkedIn but not all social media schedulers will track LinkedIn because it's a closed network. I think it's all in the technology and back end and in the network -- in the social network you are using. I think that's why you might see lower engagement but overall I still think the good outweighs -- far outweighs that part of using a scheduler.

Okay, Patricia. I think we have time to squeeze in one more question during this live webinar. This one comes from Anthony. Anthony is asking if one should use more than one press distribution service for any given news release?

You know that's a really good question. I really think it depends. I wouldn't do it at the same time. I would see how well a distribution service does and see if you've got the response that you want from that service and see if you need another one. And I think it's on a case-by-case basis really. I like -- I'm not going to name the service. There is one particular service that I like because -- it's not because of the media I reach with it but the online distribution. I get so many online placements and from me that is the key. It is not reaching media. When you want to get a really great headline, the best way to get that great headline is to reach out to that individual media outlet directly. The distribution service is really ideal for SEO, online visibility, it's ideal for reaching as many people as possible and enhancing that online visibility. So if you have chosen a distribution service and you haven't received that online visibility that you wanted, and that you were promised, then you might need to go somewhere else. If they are not -- check the analytics and if you are paying for it they should give you a good report but like I said I think it's on a case-by-case basis. You have to not all does not all dissipation channels are the same and you might choose technology, you might choose reaching out to technology writers and that list, that one distribution service is better than the other. I will say this, you can request their list of media. The media that they use. And I recommend that so before you pay for a distribution, ask them to see if you can see their list of media for the distribution that you are going to be using with them. So that can help as well. Help improve the outcome the release and the numbers you get.

All right. Thank you so much, Patricia. Thank you all so much for all of the questions that have been submitted today. Those are all the questions that we have time for in this live webinar. So if we did not have a chance to address your question during the segment, I would like to recommend getting real time mentoring assistance in a brand-new virtual environment, SCORE launched just a couple of weeks ago , this is a free virtual online meeting place where business owners can go to get questions answered and advice by professionals who are ready and available to address simple questions and more in-depth questions. They are there for support and to be a sounding board. There are peer discussion groups. So you can take the questions that may have not been answered here today, take those over there. The environment is open right now. You can visit -- there is a tab at the top of your screen within the web player that says real time mentoring and in that tab there is a link that you can register to get into the environment. And if you don't have time to do that right now and we are about to close out of the platform, you can go to www.score.org/find-mentor and all of the details and information are there too. As a reminder, a link to the recording of this session and the slide deck will be sent to all participants. That's going out in a postevent email shortly after the webinar ends. Patricia's contact information is in the slide deck, several of you asked for that during the webinar. So that information is on the slide deck. You can reference and reach out to Patricia as well to assist you with those questions and further assistance. On behalf of SCORE I would like to thank you all for attending today and I would like to give a very special thank you to Patricia for providing this excellent and informative presentation. Patricia, thank you so much.

It was a lot of fun. Thank you.

Thanks again, everyone. We hope you have a good rest of your day and take good care. [ Event Concluded ]