

CONNECTED

VISUAL MEDIA ALLIANCE

SUMMER 2020



Resilience through Crisis



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Visual Media Alliance is non-profit trade association serving Northern California's visual media industry. By providing events, education, discounts, advocacy, industry promotion and insurance programs, we help our 530 member firms become more successful and profitable.

ON THE COVER

Rod Müller, Art Director of Copa Design, shares an office space with his son while working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo by Copa Design

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Valued Association Member,

When faced with a challenge as great as COVID-19, what's most needed for resiliency is the ability to pivot.

We've been impressed by the stories of how you, our members, have quickly and adeptly taken action to keep your businesses open.

VMA is also doing its best to pivot to be of value. As a result, we created new programs to help during this time.

In May, we launched the Collective Conversations virtual roundtable series, allowing members to learn from one another. Who would have guessed we would have owners and managers communicating via the internet, not only with their voices but also smiling faces courtesy of Zoom, Hollywood Squares-style. These meetings serve the need for connection, which is in short supply during this period of isolation.

Another valuable program includes ThinkHR, which offers many HR benefits including COVID-19 webinars and materials. To help members through the rehiring phase of COVID-19, we vetted an HR attorney as a resource. And to answer your coronavirus questions, we have negotiated the availability of Gerry Bonetto, our 30-year government affairs veteran.

We hope you take advantage of these programs.

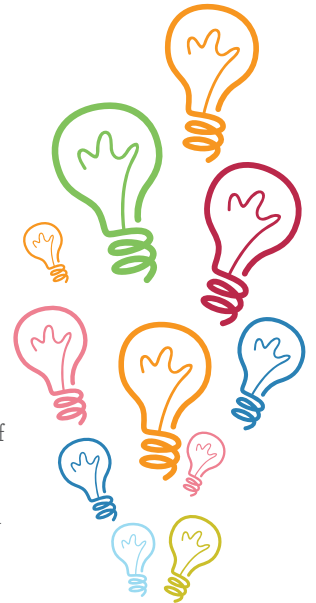
Let's get this downturn behind us!

Stay Safe,
Dan Nelson
President

ABOUT RESILIENCE

This inspiring quote by Agustín Fuentes, an evolutionary anthropologist at the University of Notre Dame, sums up VMA's view on getting through the pandemic, how we know our members will get through this, and how we aim to serve you.

“What is so important to humanity is connection. The kind of quarantines—in New York and Seattle, and what will happen in thousands of other places in the United States—will require people to connect in other ways. One of the amazing things about the human species—once harmless critters not much more than monkeys running around—is that, over time, we have become very creative. We've adapted to survive. That's what people will rely on now—coming up with incredibly imaginative ways to find connections even when they're not in the same physical space together.”



MEMBERS MAKE A COVID-19 PIVOT

All Valley Printing – making PPE products

Andresen – producing face shields

Dome – offering face shields

Dumont – creating PPE and social distance graphics

Lowest Price Print – producing PPE gear

Minuteman Press Vallejo – creating social distance signs

Pacific Color Graphics – offering PPE gear

View more at vma.bz/printisessential



Dome CEO & Owner, Tim Poole (right) donates face shields to hospitals in CA.

SGIA and PIA Merge Create Super Association

On May 1, the largest, most comprehensive member-based printing and graphic arts association in the United States was created through the long-awaited merger by Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA) and Printing Industries of America (PIA). The merger was officially announced, creating the new organization called the PRINTING United Alliance.



This new 'super association' will provide more opportunities and resources for education, training, events, government affairs representation, and safety and environmental guidance. The additional depth and breadth of these benefits are a win-win for our membership and the future of our industry.

Reopening Guidelines



As the state turns to reopen its economy, our industry is making the best decisions possible to ensure employee safety. The best single source has been from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

As a new set of guidelines arrive from all levels of government, Gerry Bonetto, our government affairs specialist, has synthesized this into a concise guide available on our COVID-19 Resource webpage, vma.bz/covid19. The seminal CDC guidelines are also available here.

We will continue to update critical documents on our site and in our member-exclusive COVID-19 Update emails.

“PRINT IS ESSENTIAL”

WINS AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT



VMA achieved victory in ensuring print and print-related businesses can remain open during this crisis. The effort coordinated by our Sacramento lobbyist, RJ Cervantes, in concert with our Southern California sister associations, was successful in getting print included on the governor's essential business lists in the state and local counties.



While an essential business designation might seem obvious to anyone working in the print industry, we incurred opposition from government agencies that naturally wanted to limit the list of essential industries in order to reduce the overall risk of infection.

The position that helped seal the win at the state level was the governor's determination to have an all-mail statewide election in November. That, of course, requires printing.

The 2020 Buyers Guide and the New Version of VM Access



Promoting our member's businesses has always been a valuable member benefit, and as the industry recovers from an epic downturn, it has never been more important.

VMA's "what-we-do" showpiece, the 320-page, 2020 Visual Media Guide, was ready to be released right before the pandemic hit.

Its delayed release will now coincide with the reopening of California businesses, with the silver lining of making a greater impact.

The other promotion tool in VMA's industry arsenal is VM Access (vmaccess.com). The latest version was released recently. It now allows members to upload videos and best customer pieces.

Spectrum Litho's New Venture CartonXpress Offers Easy Custom Packaging Solutions

CartonXpress is an emerging leader in the branded packaging industry. The company was started by Shawn Pereira, the founder of Spectrum Lithograph and a VMA member. CartonXpress offers a custom packaging solution, making it easier for small consumer companies to brand themselves. The e-commerce site fills the gap between large print production runs typically reserved for larger brands with the budgets to match, and emerging brands with smaller batch runs. Now, small entrepreneurs have a tool to help them compete with the challenges of economic change and consumer demand. They offer a variety of programs essentially allowing for the creation of custom packaging easily, in less than 20 minutes. www.cartonxpress.com



Affinity Creative Group Bolsters Brand Strategy Capabilities with New Hire, Bob Kersten



Branding, packaging design, digital media, and retail activation experts Affinity Creative Group added Bob Kersten as Executive Director, Brand Strategy. Affinity Creative Group provides marketing services, particularly for wine, spirits, and other luxury categories. Kersten will amplify Affinity's strategic offering to optimize clients' brand strategy, inform creative expression across the customer experience, and ensure the achievement of business goals.

Kersten's background includes extensive experience with leading agencies such as Landor, Prophet, Addison, and Superunion. His experience reaches beyond brand strategy to include naming, messaging, employee engagement, and implementation planning disciplines across all media. John Swain, President and Principal of Affinity Creative Group, said of Kersten's addition, "His expertise in brand strategy and other areas increases our bench strength in delivering meaningful and valuable guidance to our clients in the successful development of their brands and attainment of their business objectives during these very uncertain times."

www.affinitycreative.com

Delta Print Group Christens New Facility



Delta Print Group provides print, mail, and communication solutions with an empowered

and dedicated team. The combination of five companies, which includes River City Printers, Paul Baker Printing, Metro Print and Mail, Citra Communications, and Delta, have united as print and mail experts that strive to exceed customer expectations.

Delta Print Group is building its new facility in Natomas, California, with the addition of a Harris V-25 Press. Their imPRESSions team removed the press from one of their smaller facilities in West Sacramento and hauled three truckloads of the press equipment over a weekend. A tandem set of Martin Splicers from their Tupelo facility will be added to the press. The two-folder press will also add to the web offset firepower in the new building.

www.deltaprintgroup.com

Chen Design Offers Creative Package for Challenging Times

To help businesses in these times, Chen Design came up with a creative way to both attract more business and help other businesses in the community. Their new 4-4-4 sprint-style offer promises 4 deliverables in 4 days for \$4000, and is designed to take care of any quick design needs. www.chendesign.com



NEW MEMBERS



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VMA Works to Keep Members Resilient!

It's been a trying time since March when the coronavirus officially hit our state. As your industry association, VMA worked hard to keep you resilient during this time.

Alerts with the Latest News

You've probably received our weekly Alert emails filled with breaking news. As of June, we have sent out eight alert emails. We're seeing high open rates so we believe our members are finding value in these.

Webinars & Roundtables Related to COVID-19

We're holding webinars on topics that include more in-depth information. For example, on April 3, we had the "Critical State Legislation for Your Business" webinar with our lobbyist RJ Cervantes. On April 29, we launched our Collective Conversations, a virtual roundtable series occurring every other Wednesday. The goal of this program is to connect members to learn from each other on relevant topics. We believe a key to getting through this crisis is banding together. Visit vma.bz/cc for more information.

COVID-19 Resources

With the overwhelming amount of information facing small business owners in regard to the crisis, we launched a curated COVID-19 Resource Webpage (vma.bz/covid19). We'll keep updating the page as long as needed.

In addition, we sent email reminders of free member programs that are especially helpful during this time. This includes ThinkHR, an integrated suite of human resource tools and solutions. Members also have access to iLearning, a compilation of graphic arts online training classes.

As HR issues have been important during this time, we have vetted a labor attorney to help our members. Jenny Wiegley

of WEL Counsel (jenny@welcounsel.com) can help you with your employment law needs, from drafting or revising contracts and employee handbooks, to advising on risky terminations, to defending class-action lawsuits. VMA members receive 20-minutes complimentary to discuss their issues.

Industry Advocacy

During this time, we bumped up our advocacy efforts to get print listed as an essential business. In May, our efforts were recognized and print-related activities were deemed essential!

We also developed a webpage listing print members working on essential businesses, which can be seen at vma.bz/printisessential.

Insurance Updates

One of the key benefits available to VMA members is our insurance products. Therefore, in April to keep you abreast of the effect of COVID-19 on insurance, we mailed out a special edition of our insurance newsletter, Risk Report. View the special Risk Report newsletter at vma.bz/publications/riskreport.

As your industry association, we want to help your business stay resilient. We will continue to bring you the latest news and valuable services, help connect members, and lead advocacy efforts.

At the same time, we are also here for you on a personal level. Please feel free to pick up the phone and call Shannon, Dan, or David with frustrations, suggestions, or assistance accessing the above resources.

We stand by our tagline, that "Together. We're better." and we also add that we'll get through this together!

FREE HR SUITE FOR VMA MEMBERS

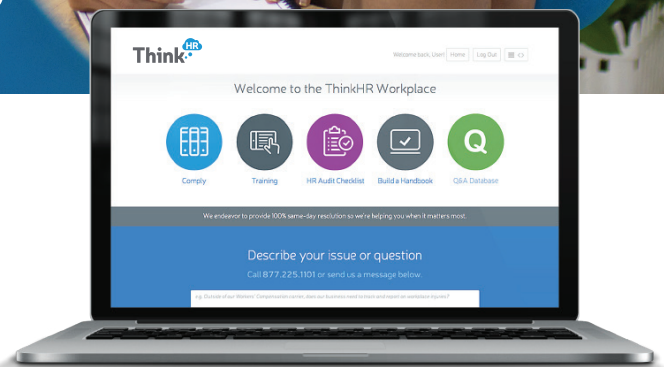
In these difficult times, we understand small business owners need all the support you can get.

As we come to grips with COVID-19 challenges and its human resource implications, we all recognize the importance of top-notch advice.

Therefore, as your industry trade association and insurance advisor, we'd like to remind you of our partnership with ThinkHR, a nationally recognized human resource firm. We are pleased to be able to offer this program to our members at zero cost to you.

Go to vma.myhrworkplace.com and use your email address to set up your account.

If you need assistance with logging in, contact Jessica Clark at jessica@vma.bz



ThinkHR provides an integrated suite of human resource knowledge, compliance tools, and training solutions supported by live HR experts. ThinkHR's expertise helps businesses with workplace regulations and litigation avoidance by providing guidance, answering pressing questions, and following up with research to resolve issues. They have resources available related to regulations and communications tools around COVID-19.



Adjusting Your Sails:

Business Crisis Requires Resilience

BY SONALI SHAH

All aspects of our lives have been dramatically impacted by COVID-19, and its effect on graphic arts businesses have been no exception. Business owners have been working hard on a broad range of issues, from staying in front of customers to keeping their employees safe, to shoring-up liquidity, reorienting operations, and navigating complicated government support programs.

Dealing with so many pressing issues all at once can be overwhelming. What do people need to overcome such a scenario? One word sums it up: **Resilience**.

Resilience is defined as “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.” This is exactly what the doctor ordered right now.

Our members, all of you, have been resourceful in these last few months in working to prevail from the adversity thrown upon small businesses by COVID-19. Until May, when printing was added to the list of essential businesses, many printers remained open, leveraging the clause in the law that allows helping other “essential businesses” such as those in healthcare, food, and government services. And creative agencies have been responsive in counseling their clients on using this time to build their brand equity.

Those measures demonstrate the seeds of resilience. But as financial author Jean Chatzky states, “Resilience isn’t a single skill. It’s a variety of skills and coping mechanisms to bounce back from bumps in the road.” Therefore, here are six principles of resilience to help your business through these times:

Exercise Adaptability & Flexibility

Companies that can be versatile and flexible will be survivors, and some may even come up with new solutions, making them potentially even winners through this crisis.

The first step is to sit down and brainstorm. Be open and assess all potential options. Make a list of your strengths and capabilities to help you come up with ideas. Think outside the box and be willing to hear all ideas.

Evaluate both for the short-term and the long-term. Can you make adjustments now, which may not be your ideal situation long-term, but will keep the lights on temporarily?

At the same time, COVID-19 is making a huge change in all aspects of our lives; it requires thinking about your business of tomorrow, so make a second list for long-term plans. For example, will restaurants be required to have disposable menus? This could be an opportunity for an agency to build a template and a digital printer to handle fulfillment.

Leverage Connection & Collaboration

Take a look at your resources and network and how they can benefit your business. One resource available to you is the resources we provide to our members. Make sure you keep an eye open for our emails and alerts, check out our COVID-19 landing page (vma.bz/covid19), and join webinars and roundtables with your peers.

It’s also a good time to look with others to collaborate or learn from—this includes partners, customers, vendors, and competitors. For example, VMA member Andresen Digital collaborated with a long-time customer who happened to be a design expert to create face shields.

Take a Customer-First Approach

During these uncertain times, companies focusing on customer experience will stand the best chance of supporting their customers, and thus protecting their own business. Act with empathy and integrity, and know your customers likely have their own struggles.

All companies will need to stay in front of their customers through a variety of methods. For example, as people get digital fatigue, graphic arts businesses can help their clients by creating interesting direct mail pieces that will stand out in the mail.

Find Purpose and Give Back

Take this time to help others, whether you volunteer to pick up groceries for a senior, or use your company to create something that the public needs. Giving can garner a sense of meaning and purpose and empower you to grow in resilience.

A number of our members are creating medical necessities like face shields and pop-up hospitals and donating them to local hospitals.

Cash Management - Create Breathing Space

We're sure you'll agree that having green bucks takes off a lot of pressure. Over the last few months, we have been sharing cashflow ideas, including loan options such as PPP, physical and online banks, corporate grants, etc.

Likewise, implementing cost-cutting measures such as hiring freezes, furloughs, deferred merit increases, cuts in non-essential spending, and potential salary and hours reductions where possible can be helpful.

Foster Wellness Physically and Mentally

Last, but not least, while you are undoubtedly putting a lot of your attention into figuring out how to get your business through these times, it's essential in all crises, and especially a viral pandemic, to take care of your body.

Self-care is an important practice for building physical and mental resilience. Employ positive lifestyle factors like proper nutrition, ample sleep, hydration, regular exercise, mindfulness, or meditation.

Adjust Your Sails!

In addition to implementing the above skills, let's also remember a simple truth: Even in a shelter-in-place world or wherever we may be on the spectrum at the time you're reading this publication, both print and marketing activities are not only critical but essential, regardless of what the government officially deems. There will always be a need for print for the simplest of necessities like our milk cartons, and there will also still be a need for marketing and advertising because there will still be companies who need to advertise in print and digital.

VMA has been supporting our small business members since 1935, and we want to remind you that together we've made it through many crises, including the Great Depression, 9/11, the dot-com bust, and the mortgage crisis. We will continue to be by your side. This is a time to make adjustments to stay resilient. Elizabeth Edwards said it well when she said, **"She stood in the storm and when the wind did not blow her way, she adjusted her sails."**

Six Tenants of Resilience

Adaptability & Flexibility

- Brainstorm options
- Think short-term & long term
- Think outside the box

Connection & Collaboration

- Review your resources
- Leverage your network
- Consider interesting collaborations

Customer First

- Your customers are your business
- Treat them with empathy & integrity
- Nurture them for the long run

Purpose & Altruism

- Makes you feel good
- Helps you connect with others

Almighty Cashflow

- Bring in more
- Increase savings
- Think of new ideas

Wellbeing

- Take care of your physical, mental, & spiritual health
- Encourage your family and employees to do so too



Perfecting the Pivot:

BY REVA HARRIS



How Pacific Color Graphics is Surviving the Crisis

Pivoting is nothing new for Pacific Color Graphics. What started as a video game packaging business has evolved into a full-service print, packaging, digital signage, trade show and promotional material, and company store provider. That evolution came as the video game industry switched to primarily digital downloads in 2010-2011. David Rekart, President of the Mesa, Arizona-based firm, had to go where the business was when millions of dollars in video game packaging dried up practically overnight.

The company branched out into long-standing, stable industries such as food production and medical billing. It also took advantage of the emerging trend around company stores, which allow employees to buy company-branded items like shirts, mugs, and computer accessories. Making that move led Pacific Color Graphics into the software creation business.

Cindy Davis, director of customer service, says that the company had to stretch beyond its initial limits in response to their customers' needs. "We really tried to become a solution and take as much off their plate as we could. With printing demand going down, the more useful we could be, the more we pushed that to our customers," says Davis. That's how they got started with trade shows and events. Pacific Color Graphics prints and ships its clients' trade show display materials, and even includes return labels to make the process as easy as possible for them.

Making the Shift

The team had to call on that same flexibility and commitment to customer service when COVID-19 turned everything on its head. "We were stopping [trade show] shipments before the shelter-in-place was announced because people weren't showing up," says Rekart. With events making up 40% of their business, they had to find other ways to earn revenue.

Davis started by identifying promotional items that would be beneficial for working from home, such as charging cables. Pacific Color Graphics is working with clients to send branded promotional products to employees as a way to keep them engaged.

For clients that want to continue to send branded promotional items to their customers, Pacific Color Graphics has solved this too, by dropshipping directly to the customer. For instance, if a client hosts a Zoom event, they send t-shirts, charging stations, hand sanitizer, gift cards, etc. to make the experience more like an in-person event.



Pacific Color Graphics is also helping clients shift to touch-free services. For AT&T, they created A-frame graphics with instructions for customers to call to place orders and set up tents and tables to facilitate curbside pickup. “We needed to be a solution to them to be a solution to their customers,” says Davis. For their restaurant clients, they’ve launched campaigns selling t-shirts to regular customers to offset some of their losses. “We try most ideas because you don’t know what will work. Once it takes hold, it grows. A lot of it comes from input from customers,” says Rekart.

While their events business dried up overnight, demand for other services, like food packaging, increased. “That sector went busy very quickly. Business increased by 50% at least, and they needed it yesterday,” says Rekart. Pacific Color Graphics is also leveraging its stock and supply chain of hygiene products for clients. It started by sending clients hand sanitizer, and now the company has expanded into personal protective equipment (PPE) for its clients’ employees. “We’re just trying to support the people who support us,” says Rekart.

Keeping a Level Head

Pacific Color Graphics has been fortunate to avoid layoffs. The company applied for a Paycheck Protection Program loan and received it, a process that Rekart describes as difficult. “It was 17 pages to complete. This was a major accounting process. We were very fortunate that my wife is our accountant,” says Rekart.

One of the biggest challenges they’ve faced is keeping everybody calm and making sure clients know Pacific Color Graphics is there. “With uncertainty comes planning and contingencies. You spend a lot of time pining over how to keep everyone working. We stay calm, and as changes come, we adjust,” says Rekart.

The team at Pacific Color Graphics is like a family, many of them being with the company for more than 20 years.

“We were all here for the last downturn,” says Rekart. They’re leaning on each other and their past experience to get through this crisis. “We all pulled together very quickly. Having a great team was a godsend,” says Davis.

To keep employees safe, roughly half of Pacific Color Graphics’ employees are working from home. For the employees who have to come in, particularly in the warehouse, they’re staggering shifts and utilizing their hand sanitizer inventory to help prevent the spread of infection. Cleaning stations are now located at the building entrance and throughout the warehouse.

Ultimately, It’s Personal

When the pandemic started, the team at Pacific Color Graphics got numerous requests that were outside of their clients’ typical needs. “Saying ‘yes’ to most of those requests shows that we’re more than printing and packaging. It brings the human factor back into our business,” says Davis.

The crisis has forced customers who usually communicate online to pick up the phone and ask for help, and as a result, everyone’s connecting more on a human level. “Things got more personal really fast,” says Rekart. Conversations that used to revolve around business now include talk about families.

Their advice to other print shops is to be helpful and brave in the face of the crisis. “‘What can I do for you?’ Those are very powerful words,” says Davis.

“Adapt and overcome. Be open to change and willing to try anything,” Rekart says. “You can’t be afraid of the dark.”





Copa team from left to right: Jason Saldana, CEO; Lucas Souza, Graphic Designer; Rod Müller, Art Director; Daniel Morais, Project Manager; and Leo Bandeira, Creative Director.

Courage, Compassion, and Communication:

Copa's Keys to Surviving the Crisis

BY REVA HARRIS

When COVID-19 turned everything on its head overnight, Copa Design, a creative agency based in Santa Clara, California, was able to keep the rug from completely sliding out from beneath them. In the face of COVID-19, the team is taking an offensive approach: "If we're going down, we're going down fighting."

The agency's president and CEO, Jason Saldana, made a promise to brace for uncertainties after the 2008 recession. "People pulled back immediately on our type of services. They started doing things in-house," says Saldana. His experience helped shape the agency's response to this crisis. Leveraging courage, compassion, and communication, the company took the following actions.

The Team Comes First

"The whole world was taken off guard. Monday we were at the office working and then Monday night, the county health inspector said we're on lockdown," says Saldana. Giving employees a sense of security was a critical lesson learned from

the 2008 downturn. Saldana says, "The first thing we did was to pay out our team until the end of the month. "He also told employees to take time off if they needed it. "People need to feel secure, and they need to feel secure quickly," says Saldana. As of mid-May, all staff has been retained.

"People need to feel secure, and they need to feel secure quickly."

In terms of transitioning to social distancing, the team already had some remote employees, with two being fully remote and two others going back and forth between Santa Clara and Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Rio is the birthplace of Copa (originally called Copacabana Design), which Saldana says started as a dream and idea by his Creative Director, Leonardo Bandeira in 2003. In 2006, the company incorporated and started to take on larger clients, evolving from a graphic design firm to a creative agency.

Copa's services also include print and packaging fulfillment. Unsurprisingly, initially, COVID-19 forced the agency to shut down that part of their business, but when a client started distributing hand sanitizers and was deemed an essential business, the warehouse was able to reopen by allowing one employee at a time.

Pulling together as a team has been critical in making it through the crisis. Communication has increased overall, and they're relying heavily on Slack and Skype. "I need that information from my team members, not to control, but to keep my fingers on the pulse," says Saldana.

"People don't know where to start, and we're helping them find that starting point again."

Making Sure Their Affairs Are in Order

After taking care of employees, Copa also cut back on unnecessary expenses such as cable TV in the conference room. "Things that were considered a luxury, we lowered or canceled," says Saldana. They also spoke to their property manager to proactively discuss negotiating their rent.

To offset revenue losses, Copa has applied for Small Business Association Disaster Assistance, the Paycheck Protection Program, an Economic Injury Disaster Loan, and local and private grants from the City of Santa Clara and Facebook. They have not received funding as of our interview, but they've been fortunate to rely on the "emergency fund" they created after the 2008 downturn.

It's About Flexibility

Copa serves a mix of B2B and B2C clients in real estate, sports marketing, supplements, and professional services industries. In the wake of COVID-19, Copa's conversations with them have shifted to a more strategic role.

After 2008, Saldana made a promise to get ahead of any future crisis. "We said, if this ever happens again, we need to be on the frontline of helping our clients," he says. The agency had to think more about the value they offer and dive deeper into their services. They shifted to an offensive approach. Saldana said, "We asked, 'How can we help you, what do you need from us to continue with your business?'"

Many clients are pivoting their services, and Copa is advising on messaging and branding for their new initiatives. "People don't know where to start, and we're helping them find that starting

point again," says Saldana. When one law firm client saw an uptick in their practice, Copa stepped in to help with messaging. Another client hadn't really leveraged their website, but with social distancing making digital communication invaluable, they need to upgrade their online presence, which Copa is

helping with as well. For Saldana and the team, the goal is "not to get business, but to keep our clients going."

And some of their clients are doing the same for their customers. They helped a real estate agent client position

himself as a community resource by coming up with ideas like a personal protective equipment (PPE) drive, and delivered pizzas from a local shop to houses in neighborhoods the broker was targeting. Saldana said, "He's now getting a lot of feedback from potential clients. . . He helped the community first and then offered his services second."

The team has also been stepping up to identify proactive ways to generate revenue. Copa's art director thought of an idea to make branded Zoom backgrounds for clients, and they are also getting ready to launch their newest service, Copa Breeze, a subscription-based graphic design service for companies. An old idea which was pushed to the forefront due to the pandemic.

The Silver Lining and The Bigger Picture

Even in a crisis, there is opportunity. Copa is collaborating with Morning Tempo, an email marketing consultancy, to build a lead generation program using thought leadership content. "Seeing opportunities like that, in terms of new partnerships, has been great for us," says Saldana.

And he and the team are staying connected to the impact the virus is having on the broader community. The entire design team participated in a call for designs from the World Health Organization (WHO). They submitted designs used to fight the social stigma around COVID-19. "What we're doing can influence somebody, inspire hope, and educate them," says Saldana.

He advises that fellow agencies, "show compassion and empathy. It's not business as usual. . . The world is hurting, but it doesn't mean that we can't move forward and that it can't get better."



Images from series custom designed for the World Health Organization Global Call Out to help stop the spread of COVID-19 by Leo Bandeira, Creative Director (top) and Rod Mueller, Art Director (bottom).



STAYING ABREAST OF COVID-19 LEGAL ISSUES

JENNY WIEGLEY, HR LABOR LAW ATTORNEY

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, especially when you're trying to run a small business. Getting tripped up by unexpected crises can be financially and emotionally devastating, which is why I've always focused my legal practice on helping clients avoid problems before they happen.

But sometimes problems are unavoidable. Like now, most businesses are struggling in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, no matter how well-prepared they thought they were for a crisis. Resilient businesses are changing their practices in any way they can to adapt to this new marketplace, and staying on top of ever-shifting legal requirements.

Here are the top three legal issues I see small businesses contending with right now, and how the most resilient businesses are using a lawyer to weather the storm:

1. Staying in compliance with brand-new federal laws.

Employers with fewer than 50 employees have previously been exempt from a number of employment laws, like the Family and Medical Leave Act. But recent federal legislation passed in response to COVID-19 changed that and introduced requirements for businesses with even just one employee. Consulting with an employment lawyer to ensure compliance can prevent significant consequences down the line, like an employee lawsuit alleging violation of a law you didn't even know applied to you!

2. Making sense of county and state orders.

States, cities, and counties have all published orders requiring businesses to operate in specific ways during different stages of the pandemic, and they are often vague and contradictory. An employment lawyer can help you determine which restrictions apply to you and when.

3. Protecting cash flow.

When money is tight, as it is for so many businesses right now, an employment lawyer can help with personnel decisions that save money without unduly penalizing employees. Sometimes a layoff or furlough is the only option, but often there are other creative solutions available, like restructuring compensation plans, workshare programs, or utilization of federal resources earmarked for small businesses.

Someday soon, we'll get back to worrying about structuring vacation policies, the mechanics of annual bonuses, etc. But for now, the name of the game is survival. Even if you have a tiny workforce, an employment lawyer can help you keep that workforce and your business intact.

Jenny Wiegley is an employment attorney providing employment law. She has 12 years of experience in drafting or revising contracts, sales plans, and employee handbooks. Jenny will spend up to 20 minutes with each member of with free advice. Contact Jenny at jenny@welcounsel.com or (415) 634-7472.



COVID-19 FEDERAL PROGRAM OVERVIEW

DR. GERRY BONETTO, GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

The threat of the coronavirus has led the federal government to take unprecedented action to help businesses and their employees meet this challenge.

It is not always easy to see how the various actions apply and intertwine with each other. However, in the limited space here, we can outline the most basic components of the various measures.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act

This act has two major components which supplement each other:

Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (EPSLA)

Up to 80 hours/10 days of paid sick leave at the employee's regular rate of pay where the employee is unable to work because the employee is quarantined (pursuant to Federal, State, or local government order

or advice of a healthcare provider), and/or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis;

Emergency Family Medical Leave Expansion Act (EMFLEA)

Up to an additional 10 weeks (besides the 80 hours/10 days) of paid expanded family and medical leave at two-thirds the employee's regular rate of pay where an employee is unable to work due to a bona fide need for leave to care for a child whose school or childcare provider is closed or unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

Key takeaways from the CARES Act:

- A \$367 billion loan and grant program for small businesses (through the so-called Payroll Protection Program).

- Expansion of unemployment benefits to include people furloughed, gig workers, and freelancers, with benefits increased by \$600 per week for a period of four months.
- Direct one-time payments to families of \$1,200 per adult and \$500 per child for households making up to \$75,000.

In future columns, I'll cover reopening concerns and safety issues as I field more questions from members about these subjects.

Gerry Bonetto is VMA Government Affairs Specialist. He has 35 years of experience working for our members on legislative and regulatory issues and is now focused on all COVID-19 subjects. Contact Gerry at gerry@vma.bz.

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