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THE FUTURE OF INSIGHTS

Insights Leaders COVID-19 Roundtable June 30, 2020

Panelists

Daryl Travis, CEO, Brandtrust

James Whaley, CEO, OvationMR

Rick Kelly, SVP Product, Fuel Cycle

Ross McLean, VP Mobile Qualitative, 20|20 Research

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Thank you to CiviCom for providing the following roundtable transcript.



Lenny Murphy: We're going to start this off the way that we start off every one which is a quick check-in on what you're seeing in the business today. **So you can give it the perspective of the last few months or just kind of the point in time, but we're trying to get a feel for business levels and where they are as we continue to recover.** So actually we'll go ladies first this time. So Silvena, how do things look at BuzzBack?

Silvena Milenkova: Sure. Things actually have been going really well for us. I think it's been very interesting, and I can probably tell you that if we had this conversation maybe 13 weeks ago or even eight weeks ago, we probably will be focusing on some more different things. But when I look at kind of the macro things that we've been seeing, it's been a lot of, as I describe it, living in the extreme. So we have some areas of our business and some of clients who are doing lots and lots of research, almost everything, and others basically practically nothing or they're kind of trying to be very, very selective and very, very focused on key initiative. And first, looking at this by industry because of the sectors of change, but it wasn't really that, let's say, one category was doing all the research and others weren't. There were some kind of overarching things that maybe now travel and hospital, as everybody knows, were kind of slower and maybe healthcare was doing more work, but it wasn't consistent across each of our clients.

And more interestingly, we were seeing that people were trying a lot of different things with maybe the common thing being that one size didn't fit all, and the method was a bit less important. It was more about finding insight, so we had clients reaching out for things but at super early stage which I was kind of thinking, "Maybe they wouldn't be doing this because the world is not stable and it won't look the way it looks today in a couple of years or even months, but they were doing that foundational work." We're thinking, "Okay, maybe communications testing will be a big deal, but actually a lot of people are doing it." So the exception is maybe in-person qualitative or CLT. A lot of the other methodologies were kind of coming and going, but we weren't seeing the off-the-shelf approach. So there was always some twist, and I think that probably was one of the most common themes that I was seeing when it came to how people were approaching research, who was doing it, what questions they were trying to answer, and what methods they were focusing on.



Lenny Murphy: So you did mention that you couldn't say it was kind of more specific, but if you had to at least give a gist of the types of companies that are doing more versus less, could you give some sense of just in general what that looks like?

Silvena Milenkova: So, we're seeing quite a bit of movement in healthcare, I would say, which probably doesn't surprise anybody here but also a lot of work in tech and telecom and I'm seeing that runs the gamut. It's not just one type of work. Food and beverage, I would say is mixed. That's the one that I think there is that kind of polarization, if you will, some doing a lot and some not doing that much. I would say personal care probably would fall in that bucket as well where you're seeing some doing quite a bit and some not. Obviously, kind of household areas are doing quite a bit of work. For them though, I think, for what at least I've seen, the work is a lot more tactical and a lot less maybe kind of longer term strategy. At least, that's what I've seen over the course of the past few months with them.

Lenny Murphy: Okay. All right.

Silvena Milenkova: I was going to say when I kind of look at some of the peripheral sectors, I think we are seeing quite a bit of, I would say, steady flow and kind of go the course from a lot of the financial services companies. I think they've kind of been a lot less reactive and obviously, I think, some of the work they do is a lot longer term. So some of the impact, I think, has been slower to kind of come there.

Lenny Murphy: Okay, all right. I'm going to hop around over here. So Ross, you have had an interesting year, but you've also been kind of the epicenter of, one of the hardest hit categories of qual and, of course, one of the solutions that that hard hit which is virtual solutions. **So what have you seen over the course of the last few months through this journey of acquisitions as well as specifically within the qualitative standpoint and where do things stand right now?**

Ross McLean: Well, yes, it's just been kind of a breathless year because we were – remember February, mid-February when everything was all normal? And then, we started hearing whispers of COVID, and toward the end of February, beginning of March, everyone realized, "Well, you know what we've got? We're supposed to be doing



face-to-face interviews. We're supposed doing focus groups as part of this long-running, very foundational work that we do, and we can't do them." It's absolutely very clear that we'll not be doing any face-to-face work. So we spent the first probably two, three months of this just madly switching research from face-to-face to call board or call meeting or virtual ethnography just to sort of keep the people who needed to be in touch with consumers in touch with them. So that has been extraordinary. Obviously, the facility side of the business is down, and I mean it literally came to a complete stop, and it's just now starting to reopen. So we've got that going on, but the circumstances are lousy, but it's definitely been good to be able to help our clients out and help people learn how to do stuff online that they were doing face-to-face. There's a lot of opportunity to do that and getting people quickly trained up and sort of settled into a new way of working online so that they weren't completely and utterly disrupted.

As soon as you cut the line to consumer sentiment in a way that qualitative sort of brings it, people start feeling blind immediately, especially when their consumers' lives are changing so dramatically. So I think that there's been some pullback in some parts of the qualitative space obviously, and some of it's been forced with the appetite. People are still very much going, "Okay, I know what experience I'm having. What experiences are my consumers having when they go in my store or when they consider online shopping or all of this stuff?" It's just been extraordinary, but I think that curiosity is really healthy because, I think, the companies that get what their consumers are going through right now, not kind of the new normal whenever we get back to that but what are they doing and feeling right now, have been able to come up with really smart solutions that I think, in some cases, can save their business. So being part of that is actually - even under awful circumstances, it's great to be able to be there for clients and for researchers like that.

Lenny Murphy: Okay. So, Rick, I see you nodding a lot and I'm thinking that - so some online qual platforms have boomed during this process, right? They're like, "Whoa, having the best years ever." I suspect that you're in that category as well, so how are things going on your end?



Rick Kelly: Yes, I mean I think we're in a very fortunate position where it's actually been a positive year, and the growth still come year-over-year. Obviously, there are some challenges and big RFPs and getting headway in March, April, early May, but fortunately we've seen growth overall. And, of course, we're a little different model than a typical research agency in that we're interested in long-term licensing and technology, but again, qualitative research has exploded, and we've been able to do things like essentially migrate in-person UX Labs and UX research entirely online. So eye tracking, wireframe testing, remote moderated usability sessions, it's all been able to happen which is really incredible, and similar to Silvena, essentially we see that there's no specific behavior across categories. You don't see a complete drop or a complete rise in research. We do know that, starting about the second week of March, you can track utilization on our platform, and it's just gone up and up and up as people are forced to do more and more online research, and you know me, the way I kind of think about is you hear retailers talking about going through digital transformation, right? And essentially, in a period of about three months, they've been forced to do about three years' worth of digital transformation, and I actually think that's happening with the insights industry. Similar to Ross, everybody's saying, "Okay. Well, we have to just adopt video focus groups." There's no other solution other than just to bite the bullet and do the digital transformation as necessary to capture insights.

Lenny Murphy: Okay. Jim, you play a lot on the sample side, right? **It's a big part of your business, so what are you seeing in terms of the overall growth and/or the shift towards driving more online qualitative versus online quant within the sample category?**

James Whaley: Sure. So the course was started out with business volumes and then sort of has morphed into what's the mix, right? So I'll just make the comment that from a business volume standpoint and I guess fortunate in that, we started out this sort of adventure, if you will, with a fairly strong pipeline that sort of worked through starting in early February, and it kind of took us through sort of the end of April. And then, maybe we started seeing a bit of a weakness maybe into May, but then we started seeing things picking up maybe mid-May which is sort of normal May, early June volumes. So, as far as we were concerned, things are looking like a normal sort of second quarter type of situation where people were feeling optimistic. So as far as overall business volumes are concerned, I think people are



kind of on track and trying to push through. I don't know if that's stimulus-related. I don't know how much of that you need to really sort of attribute to that.

So as far as a change in business mix, definitely early on when the pressure of, "Hey, we need to move things to digital," especially for quant, there were a lot of phone calls and a lot of emails going, "Hey, can you help us get this thing recruited?" We get some of that being primarily a quant sample organization for our sample business. We do other things, but we do a lot of recruiting to communities for various lengths or periods of time. We don't do traditionally small quant sample types of activities, but for certain types of audiences, we will do that but I would say that 300% growth or pickup in types of activities for, "Hey, we want to do quant. Can you do this type of quant?" from a wide variety of people that we hadn't heard from before. So absolutely, the industry was impacted by this, and they were looking for new suppliers.

Lenny Murphy: Okay. All right. So, Daryl, we talked a lot about kind of the tactical nuts and bolts, technological shifts, what's happening more on the strategy side?

Daryl Travis: Yes, it's interesting. We're having a good year, and so we're grateful and feel blessed for that. I think I would really attribute it to a few things. One is that, because we are research and strategy, clients tend to come to us for things that are a little bit more challenging and they know there are going to be human truths and psychology and behavioral science and deeper dives involved in understanding how to change behavior. So they're expecting a bigger, sort of broader project. There are plenty of challenges still in the marketplace, so we've benefitted from that quite a bit. There were a few projects that were cancelled and/or delayed but very few. Actually, I've been surprised by how strong it's been thus far this year.

The other thing is, I think, clearly because we have pharmaceutical and healthcare deep experience, and so much of our business is in that area, it's been pretty much business as usual for many of them. And so, those bigger, more challenging projects are still going, and we're benefitting from that. Also, I think I know that because we've always been virtual, because we do deep qual on a global basis and the costs are prohibitive, so we've always had the capability to do that virtually for clients, so we could transition really quickly and really easily. Our team had to



scramble just a little bit because we're used to doing sessions with clients live, and so that had to transition to Zoom and Miro and platforms like that, but they did it. And I think because all of us are trying to figure out how to maneuver this, clients have offered a lot of grace and a lot of understanding as well, so they've been very patient as we've made that transition. But, knock on wood, unless the bottom drops out, we're going to have a great year so...

Lenny Murphy: It's great.

Gregg Archibald: With that going forward, there are a few things I want to ask about, and Silvena kind of referenced it. And Rick, I was curious about you, but Daryl, you just referenced it. One of the thoughts is that clients are starting to rethink their need for foundational work now, and we've heard this from a few people. **Are you seeing that the volume of things like issues around attitude and usage of brand landscape or brand drivers, those kinds of foundational work components starting to step up just a little bit?** And I'll leave it to whoever wants to answer.

Rick Kelly: Right. I mean I can answer this. So I think initially there was a pullback from some of the foundational work with the expectation that we were going to go into this whole quarantine situation. It was going to be a month to six weeks of kind of lockdown, and then everything will come back to normal. And I think what's happening now is I think businesses and everyone's realizing that this is going to be a long-term, multi-year impact, and the changing consumer and consumption patterns are probably going to shift alongside that. And so, the foundational work, I would say that it's less one-time projects but I would say that the long-term view, but essentially that consumer behavior is going to be evolving, and staying in front of that is coming back very, very rapidly. And so, over the past six weeks, I think we've seen a huge pickup in that side of the business, whereas foundational components, brands, those types of things are going to become more important in the future too.

Gregg Archibald: And Silvena, what...?

Silvena Milenkova: Yes, I agree with Rick.



Gregg Archibald: Yes, go ahead.

Silvena Milenkova: Yes, I agree with Rick. I think that's exactly right. The one thing that maybe I would build from on that would be that we do see that return, but I don't exactly see it in the same way, right? So some of those things that you just mentioned, Gregg, right? The new decision drivers, they are there but they're more hidden with these consumer lens, right? It's more about, "Help me understand what I do with this evolving landscape," not as much as, "What are the five, six, seven things to focus on? I kind of know what's happening but help me flesh out why, then help me kind of be in the forefront of adapting to it," not just, "Okay, do a traditional study that gives me kind of where I sit and what everybody else is doing and where they're sitting." But it's more of like, "Okay, the so what of that and the why this is important for me to maybe focus on today versus, as Rick was saying, six months from today or maybe once this is over." The idea of over doesn't exist anymore. So there are a lot of ideas around why is this happening, how likely is it to continue, is it evolving. "Okay, tell me where everybody else is sitting, but I know tomorrow, they may make one move and I will have to be adapting to that," so kind of this more agile, more plug-and-play thing is what I'm seeing more so than, "Yes, we're going to the traditional A&U with all its components, and we're going to wait X amount of time and have this dropped with a brochure." It's a bit less structured. It's a lot more fluid, and I think that's a response to what's happening, but those are two things that we've been seeing prior to this situation, right? So, I think it's just kind of the culmination of it.

James Whaley: I totally agree with that. So, we have two pieces of business that we focus on. Our clients are doing syndicated tracking work, and some of those clients also spin off some strategy and custom work with that, and then we have of course, clients that do more ad hoc work. The ad hoc clients have come to us and said, "Hey, our traditional business is off. We're not sort of chasing fast work anymore or sort of tactical work. We're having to rethink a more strategic relationship with our clients. They're asking for a different kind of value proposition from us," the things that Silvena was just talking about and Rick was just talking about. So, we're having to look for longer term engagements with them to think about what are customers going to be thinking about in the long term. I think that's an opportunity for the market research industry as a whole through this process and



moving into the future because I think nobody knows what the future is going to look like. We never have, right? But it was always sort of more predictable, right? What it was going to be, but now this has sort of, especially with the most recent events that have come out of, probably had been exacerbated by COVID. So now everyone's going, "Okay, what is the new normal?" And I think we, as market researchers, have this opportunity to really lead, and I think that this is where our sweet spot is, and that's what our clients are asking from us. So, the projects that we get involved in from the sampling standpoint tend to be much longer commitments and much deeper thinking in terms of sampling methodologies.

Gregg Archibald: So, Jim, let me just clarify one thing real quick before we move on, and I've seen Lenny kind of have this anxious look on his face a couple of times. So, you mentioned that you've had 300% growth. Can you give a little bit of perspective, is that month over month or year over year or...?

James Whaley: I said 300% increase in qualitative requests.

Gregg Archibald: Okay, got it.

James Whaley: Yes, so not growth in my business volume.

James Whaley: We've stayed steady, maybe slightly increased during this period. So, we expected to have year-over-year growth in Q1 and Q2. We expected 30% increase this year from last year. We have maybe 10% increase. We consider that a win given the current environment. I think so, yes.

Lenny Murphy: Yes. So, we've kind of talked about this future now, so let's transition now a little bit because a week or so ago having this conversation, there was just what looked like blue skies ahead. We're heading in the right direction and not quite so sure if that's the scenario now. I think we're back in a situation of uncertainty. I think still I would characterize it as, I think, we're still moving in the right direction, but that movement is likely going to be slower than the thought just a few weeks ago, and there darn sure could be some dips as we're adjusting to the situation. And I think that has implications on planning, right? As a whole, as an individuals, we're rethinking our strategy. In the fall, are the kids going back to school, all of those



things, right? We're adjusting off contingencies that we haven't really thought about from a business standpoint. We're adjusting off contingencies and thinking that maybe some things we have to do that we thought would not be necessary. **What are you guys seeing both within your own businesses and with anything you're picking up from clients or partners on is there any changing now in reaction to this new environment of potential uncertainty?** Any why don't we start with you, Daryl? Because I see you sitting in a building, in an office, right? In Chicago.

Daryl Travis: Yes, because I'm the only one here.

Gregg Archibald: At least you don't have to wear a mask because you're the only one there.

Daryl Travis: Yes. It's interesting. We've done a deep dive recently with the consumer to try to get a good sense on what's going on with them, and I think the thing that's most important from a brand perspective and probably for all of us is that the social contract between institutions and society and individuals has completely been laid bare. Hence, we're all now in if not cynical somewhat skeptical mode, and it's very hard to know what to trust, and so all our interactions with major brands, I would say that, given what's happened with COVID and with the George Floyd tragedy and the protests, we've moved from a time of COVID to a time of intense reflection. And all the brands are just saying, "Oh, what could we do next?" And I think the realization is hitting them pretty hard that you can't just sell stuff anymore. You've got to have purpose. You've got to be concerned about how you treat your employees, what you do with your profits, and your whole value proposition to society.

So, we saw in the research where people would tell us the basic things like complete disorientation. The consumers, I mean. Complete disorientation, we had one respondent tell us about his four-year-old daughter, at the dinner table, said to the whole family, "Is it still yesterday?" And that just was such a great realization, right? We're completely dislocated. We're completely disoriented. And so, it's going to take a little while to put all those pieces back together, but I think the thing about what's happening with the consumer is really causing corporate brands to just stop and think, right? And what's interesting is in the study, we



would take the consumer through the progression of COVID. This was before the George Floyd tragedy, and they could take us through exactly what's going on and how they're feeling and what's happening to them emotionally and psychologically. And then, we took them to brands towards the end of the emotional inquiry interview, and it was blank. I mean they literally said, "That's the last thing I'm thinking about right now. What I'm thinking about right now is can I get toilet paper at the grocery store." That's what they think. When we've shared that with major brands, they've been quiet. Let's just say quiet because they're all thinking.

And then, there's a great video. If you guys haven't seen it, it's on YouTube or I could send you a link to it. Someone took all of the COVID commercials that all the brands put together, and they strung together about a three-minute spot, and everybody says the same thing. And so, it becomes so shallow, it's meaningless beyond what you could ever imagine. You want to hear a really silent room when you show that. That would be for them because they don't want that. Obviously, they want a brand that meaningful to people. So I think this time of reflection is going to be a pause and some of the things that they do while they stop to figure out, but then they'll come out of the gate hard, I think, and trying to understand what they can do to be better companies, better brands.

Gregg Archibald: **So, what about us as business leaders, Daryl?** So that's one for one and totally get that and it's easy to think about for a P&G, Unilever, et cetera, et cetera, right?

Daryl Travis: Yes, I think we have to respond to that, of course. That's sort of the first think I think of. As business leaders, we have to do the same thing. We're paying so much more attention to our team. We've always been very centered and concerned with diversity, but I think we got hit right between the eyes like, "Well, we haven't done enough," right? We just have not done enough, so throughout all this, we've communicated a lot more, and it's really made a big difference. We have a town hall every week which we never did before, and our people are just saying, "This is amazing. We've got to keep doing this." And our leadership team has met more. We just communicated probably at least twice as much as we ever communicated before, and then also just being really sensitive to what people are saying to us about boundaries that time is just completely breaking down and you hardly



know what day it is. And so, you have to be more concerned about work-life balance, so we've created more vacation, free vacation. We gave them two days at Memorial Day and two days off after the 4th coming up, and we gave them an extra week vacation so just like pushing them to get out of this drill that we're in where we've lost our boundaries and lost our sense of – saying, "Is it still yesterday?"

Lenny Murphy: So, could I come work for you, Daryl? Because, man, that sounds really good.

Daryl Travis: You want to start?

Lenny Murphy: Yes. So to touch this diversity issue, let's talk about this now because I've been thinking about it. Here's the perspective. As an event producer, right? The past couple of years, we've paid an awful lot of attention to gender and diversity and it's a challenge. It's a challenge to play Tetris, right? To get people up on stage and now we're very cognizant that we need to do more as well thinking at iX that we need to have ethnic diversity, et cetera, et cetera. And so I know, as an employer, it's hard to find some of the people with the appropriate skills or at least what we've thought about in the past, right? What's the appropriate skill set? And now there is, "We must." It's not an obligation. It's a moral obligation, right? That we need to do this. We need to try harder, and honestly I'm not sure how the hell to do this but it's hard. I don't have a clean strategy on how to identify the appropriate folks to create a more diversified workforce, but I know that it's important. **So are you guys thinking about that and thoughts on how to do it?** Jim, I saw you raise your hand, so what do you do?

James Whaley: Yes. So I'd just like to state just transparently that at Ovation we're 50% female in business. It's 50% female executive team, and it's 50% minority executive team in terms of composition, and then it's 25% African American executive team, so there's the statistics. So I think we're leading in that area. That was not set out, designed that way. It was just we were out hiring and we put together a team, and it just happened to turn out that way. It was the best candidates partially through hiring, partially through the network of people that we knew and we trusted. So we're very grateful for the team we have and they're doing a great job.



Lenny Murphy: Okay. That's great, and you're a lucky SOB which I've always known about you, JIM. So I think for a lot of...

James Whaley: Better be lucky than disappointed.

Lenny Murphy: Yes, absolutely. So there's luck and there's purposes, and I think that we're in that situation where we need to start acting with purpose and, Daryl, you touched on that with earning that.

Daryl Travis: Yes, absolutely.

Lenny Murphy: **So, from a purpose standpoint, how do we address these issues within our industry itself which, let's face it, is predominantly white industry?** I think we did pretty well from a gender perspective from an overall composition, not in leadership though, but we need to do more and work harder. So, Ross, Schlesinger is a big broad company, lots of facilities all over the place. Are you guys trying to tackle this in a different way across Schlesinger?

Ross McLean: Well, I think that aside from the long-term fixture where a big company like Schlesinger or 20|20 has opportunities that they can bring people in at all levels. First, there are more opportunities to do that within a larger company. Well, I really also applaud the stuff that's been done during COVID because there's been a really good open communication. Steve Schlesinger sends a video every Sunday and he talks about the stuff that's important to him and the company and the future that he wants to build. And people like that have been doing a great job at just saying, "Here's where we stand. Here's what's important to us," and ensuring a culture of inclusivity and ensuring that there's sort of a North Star of, "This is where we're going. This is where we're going to keep going," that just keeps people focused on it and making the right decisions.

I think a lot of positive change will ultimately come out of this. It's going to be painful, but there's no question if you've worked in an organization that does better with diversity than the type of people before, you notice it and you feel it. And you see the benefit of it, and you don't want to work in a less diverse environment anymore. So, I think, a lot of companies are well down that road. You



just need to be continuing to push harder and harder, and this just gives people the opportunity to take a stand and introduce the conversation and continue to drive to do better and better. But the big thing is once you start doing that, once you have a more diverse workspace, it becomes very obvious, all the benefits of it and how much better it makes you at understanding human truth and humanity and filtering that right down to consumer behavior. Those two things are incredibly closely linked, so hopefully this will get those conversations going and open things up and we're addressing it forward quicker than we did before. I mean that might be overly optimistic, but I think that is one thing that really can and probably will come out of this.

We've spent with a COVID panel, qualitative, 50 American households that have been rounded. We've been hearing from them, in some cases, daily and the really powerful thing is these conversations are happening. Conversations about race and conversations about diversity are actually happening as a result of this. People are feeling it. This is big enough that it's a crisis, but one that has the potential to actually open things up and allow change. So I'm really encouraged and I see that right down at the consumer level. People who didn't talk about race or diversity or any that kind of stuff with their parents or with their family, those conversations are happening. So I think that there's big opportunity in this if we just keep our shoulder into it and keep going.

Lenny Murphy: Yes. So, Rick, as a tech company, right? You have a very defined set of skill sets generally that you're looking for and that would define that more so than other pieces, **so how are you guys tackling this as we move forward?**

Rick Kelly: Yes, it's a great question. I think I've never been so grateful to work in technology because really it's technology like smartphones and cameras and everything like that that has uncovered the disparities and the brutalities that have existed for a long time and been going on for decades without our knowledge and awareness. And so, I think technology has a big role to play. For us, we've done a few things. Obviously, there's been a lot of self-reflection. There's been a lot of questions, and as you put it earlier, it's not just a business issue. This is a moral issue, and I think that as a group, we want to build a better society. And so, when it comes to what we're doing specifically, so we actually built a group inside Fuel Cycle. We call it a



task force that's really devoted to racial justice, and so it includes people from early stage employees to executives and there's a whole group of people that are working actively on the questions of how do we hire for more diversity, how do we support communities, how do we help educate and hire and bring in the right people that help develop that better society that we're all working for. I think, similar to Jim's point, we're fortunate that we think of like our engineering team. It's a diverse group built of – well, honestly it's predominantly immigrants and people who are first generation Americans that come from Latin America, from India, from Eastern Europe. And so, really it's looking outside the core hiring base and looking for diverse groups to make contributions and realize that, as Ross said, it ends up being a beautiful thing when you work with people from all walks of life, right?

Lenny Murphy: Okay. Silvena, how about BuzzBack?

Silvena Milenkova: Well, in a way, given how much work there needs to be done, it's a little bit hard to kind of tout our accomplishments, although we are kind of similar to Jim. Women know business. Most of our leadership is women. We have a proportion of minorities, and we always have made that one of our core values, the idea of diversity from multiple angles, right? Because we don't hire one type of person. We've never hired somebody who studied statistics in school. There are not that many who do anyway, but also we've never hired always business majors. We always have looked at kind of a variety of people, so we have people in our team who are biology majors and come from top university. We have other people with a lot less "science-y" degrees who may be studied business or psychology or sociology. We have people who are math majors. We have people in philosophy. We have people who are literature majors. The whole idea there being that we want those different perspectives, and with those perspectives, we also always look at people coming from different areas and experiences. We have a huge proportion, you can tell by my accent, of international employees. The point of that is we do global work. It's really important to have somebody in-house who understands some of those sensibilities. The same thing happens to working with minority communities. A lot of the work we do has to do with that especially with the growing populations in the US and kind of the push from some of your clients



to understand them better. So almost kind of aligning of our values, we try to make that be a priority for us and think through a kind of more systemic way.

I can tell you it's not been hard. I think we're probably a little bit blessed also being in New York to find 40 candidates and be able to actually fulfill all of these requirements, maybe not with one person but create a team that would be able to embody that. I think that what we're doing now next year is being a bit more systematic in the way we're approaching it, so for every opening, we're kind of trying to have that, not just maybe for some key ones or some obvious ones. So for us, the work is not done. I think it will be an ongoing learning process, but being a bit more targeted in addition to being strategic and putting some of those processes in a more direct way. So not just the leadership team but maybe our middle managers and kind of people who work with them when they're approaching this and working and looking and interacting with others are able to apply the same process, I think, is where we're going at the moment.

Lenny Murphy: Okay. That's great. So I'm going to be conscious of time and we're kind of moving into the next phase of, "What comes next?" Right? And, Jim, you said, "We don't know what the future holds," and we damn sure don't this year. I'm waiting for the aliens to land, Godzilla to rise out of the ocean, something. The meth gators, seen that meme? Don't flush your meth down the toilet in Florida. It makes the gators mean. Just whoo! Who knows what's coming next?

Gregg Archibald: Oh, man.

Rick Kelly: Hopefully, that's not from personal experience, Lenny.

Lenny Murphy: No, it is not. It is not.

Rick Kelly: I'm joking. I'm joking.

Lenny Murphy: There's a Facebook group called 2020 Sucks, this forum, that has nothing but memes, right? The 2020 memes and...

James Whaley: We may look back on this year and say, "It was the best year ever."



Lenny Murphy: Most interesting, Jim. That's for sure.

James Whaley: From a personal growth standpoint, we might look back on it.

Lenny Murphy: That'll give you, so let's talk about that angle. That's an interesting angle to think about, the future, and we'll start there and I'll even share an experience. For me, personally there was a time in my life where I was very focused on enhancing my spiritual growth, and over the years being a parent, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, that just became very much a secondary thing. I have found the need over the last few months to reconnect with that, right? I have found the need to be able to take a few minutes each day and meditate just to get grounded and deal with the anxiety and those type of things, and I appreciate that. I experience that as some type of growth. I think it has helped me have clarity in thinking about what comes next so this balance between taking care of myself as an individual so I could be more effective in all of my roles as a business owner, as a partner, as a father, as a friend.

Now, is that in response to, "Oh, crap. The world's gone crazy," or is that a sustainable thing that will continue? I don't know, but I certainly would like to think that it is productive change that will continue despite the situational components of that. So for each of you, what I'd like to hear is kind of your thoughts on how you have changed through this as individuals, as business owners, as all the different roles, and what your hope is on what that change might look like as it carries forward through this whatever the future holds, and we'll kind of use that to kind of wrap up the conversation. And, Gregg, I'm actually going to start with you on that because you've been quiet and you haven't really gotten the chance to tag in, **so how have you changed and what do you hope to see change more in the future?**

Gregg Archibald: So one of those things that I've recognized about myself for a long time is how little I know, and I think that I've increased my level of understanding that I know even less than I thought that I did. My ability to predict, to understand the moments in time to really have the truest connection that I can to the level of transparency that we're having in social justice issues, all of these I'm recognizing



that I just know way less than I thought I knew, and I never thought I knew a lot to begin with. So to your point, what are some of the things that I'm doing? Being in Richmond, Virginia which is the capital of the confederacy, we've had a lot going on here with the statues on Monument Avenue, and I've gone down to try and be a part and try to understand more about what's going on in social justice, inequality issues and a number of different related topics. I think I probably moved down Maslow's hierarchy a little bit to some of the safety and security and making sure I've got food and making sure I've got toilet paper and some things that are more basic, being thoughtful about how I'm spending my money and those kind of things, but you did bring up one issue. I am spending more time in meditation, and that's to keep my brain focused on what it needs to be focused on for that day for those hours. That's probably how I personally am thinking about this and addressing this.

Lenny Murphy: Okay. We're just going to go around in the order that I see you. So, Rick, how about you?

Rick Kelly: Yes. I'm not meditating or praying any more than I used to, but I think Jim said that this might turn out to be the best year in terms of personal growth and reprioritization, and actually I really agree with that. It's uncertain and the road ahead is like I'm less confident in knowing what's going to happen next year than I do this year. But, for me, personally I have two small children. I have a seven-year-old and a two-year-old, and I have never spent so much time with them as I do now. Busy, working on the business, traveling all over, and essentially saw the kids on weekends if I was lucky and now I get to spend an intense amount of time with them. And we know each other a lot better than we did, and we spend a lot more time together. And I think that's a beautiful thing, and I'm kind of grateful for that in that. Spending time with kids has become really, really important to me and something I don't want to change. As flights begin to reopen and conferences come back online, I want to be able to spend as much time with those kids as possible while they're young.

Lenny Murphy: Okay. That's great. Now, I have to say, yes, I agree but we are really anxious for school to start back normally as well. So I have no kids. Kids are pretty exciting, yes, as well.



Silvena Milenkova: I'm with you on that one, Lenny.

Rick Kelly: The whole Zoom school thing is pretty much a disaster. This kid pretending to be on Zoom and everything. Actually, we've put my son into home school for the fall not because we're super excited about that but just because if there's a risk of doing this whole Zoom school thing again, we'd rather have more flexibility and control otherwise, so we'll see how that goes.

Lenny Murphy: We have the choice here. They can continue to learn or they'd go to class, and we asked kids, "What do you want to do?" And they all said, "Go back to school." So all right, we'll make it work. No, it's great. Daryl, how about you? Personal growth and what do you hope to see go forward from here?

Daryl Travis: Yes. I think it's such an interesting time because you can't help but reflect on what's happening. Everything is uncertain and I'm not sure about much at this point, but I am sure that it's too late to save normal. Normal is gone, and so everything is going to change. It's going to change significantly, and I'm with Jim. This is a time where, I think, most people are saying, what we're hearing them say and what I think I'm feeling myself is that this is a time to reevaluate what actually matters, and let's focus on that because that's the only thing that's going to make a difference anyway. Personally, and professionally, it's hard to separate the two when you're an entrepreneur and you've been doing this your whole life, but it's definitely a time of reflection and it's going to lead, I think, to positive change. It might be painful, but good transformation usually involves some pain so...

Lenny Murphy: Yes, absolutely. Silvena, how about you?

Silvena Milenkova: For me, I think the most interesting thing has been realizing how much I rely on personal and in-person face-to-face interactions. I have a huge team, and I also do a lot of kind of client work and industry work, and I've always thought I'm a good communicator. I'm able to meet people where they are, and this thing happened. And I realized that actually I'm a good communicator but in a different setting. [Laughter] This was a very different setting. So kind of trying to go back and figure out how to communicate and more importantly in which ways so you go, "What



are the appropriate venues for each of this? Is it an email? Is it like a quick standup? Is it like more of a business discussion?" And being able to time that around what other people were doing and actually sit down and not just talk but also listen has been the biggest thing for me because the way in New York, things move really fast. Our business has always been very fast-paced too, and there are a lot of things that in "old normal" days, we didn't have to say. You're kind of there. You're doing it together. This is a very different circumstance. So for me, it's actually been a little bit of how to communicate and when and to make that a point to do so because it's not as easy or it's not as like normal now to walk up to somebody or see them or say things and also to stop and listen.

So my hope is I think kind of everybody is kind of talking around this idea of idle reflection but also I think now when we communicate with people, whoever they may be, we get their time because there's a point to communicate. And I think there's more of a purpose in that understanding, so I hope that continues because I think people are now really trying to stop and listen and have a conversation or have an experience together versus some of those we're together but everybody's kind of doing their own thing or everybody is on their own way situation. So I think, for me, that is my biggest hope probably paired with this idea of empathy because everybody's going to have different challenges. I talk to people who live alone. They have different challenges. People with families have different challenges. People who are just couples have different challenges in different parts of the country and the world, but at the end of the day, we still somehow have to come together and being aware of that and trying to be more empathetic to those situations, I think, both personally and professionally that's what I'll hope for.

Lenny Murphy: That's great. Hey, Jim. How about you?

James Whaley: So, yes, I think about this question, I'm thinking back to when I still got my business career out and that was at IBM, and they have this thing called Sales School which was a yearlong process. They love to give you slogans and things that eat into your head. Two of those things, one was, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care," which is a thing I mean that stuck with me. Silvena was talking about which was, "Eighty percent of communication



is listening.” So those are two things that have really served me well during this time and really throughout my career because, especially now when we’re not in each other proximity, where we’re not bumping into each other at the water cooler, where we’re not having face-to-face meetings, it’s really important when you don’t have the visual signals from somebody to really - let’s say when you’re getting any kind of any trigger at all or any kind of a sense that there’s something that needs to be discussed to say stop to really listen for it to get the clue, to pick up on the clue and say, “Hey, what’s going on with you? What’s on your mind? Hey, do you want to just have a chat about what’s going on with your family or whatever?” I mean you can be subtle about it.

We are very fortunate that we’re a close-knit team and that has good things and bad things associated with it sometimes, but sometimes when you’re moving really fast, it’s easy to just sort of let things sort of flow along and you just sort of forget about the human relationship because you’re just sort of trying to work out, right? And you think everything is good, right? You think as long as business is good, you’re busy, everything is fine, but it’s not always. So we really have taken this time and learn really the hard way in some cases, like Daryl was saying and some others were saying, that we have to have that once or twice a week town halls style kind of meeting where we all get together and everyone talks about what’s going on and not only just business things but positives that have happened during the week, successes, maybe some things that were sort of like not successes but things that were like gaps but we could all laugh about, right? Whatever and have a human face to our business, right? Personal successes. So those are all things that we learned along the way by doing this, and we’ve had some personal tragedies that have happened during this time. We’ve had some people that have family members lost to COVID, and those were tough, dark times for the team. And we’ve learned how to help each other after that process, so this has been a journey to say the least.

Lenny Murphy: Yes. Thanks, Jim. Ross, bring us on home, my friend. Share your wisdom.

Ross McLean: Wow. Yes, I mean I had a long time to think about what my answer to this would be, and what I’ve observed in myself is my stress level has gone up, my worry level has gone up. It bothers me. Uncertainty bothers me. The pain that people are going



through is just like this background noise of stress level, yes, and then you're dealing with working from home and homeschooling and team management in the summer when there are no camps or sports or anything. So, yes, I've been and, as a company, we've been really good with, "Do what you need to do to stay sane. Get some exercise. See your friends. Take days off," all of that kind of stuff. But then, I also realize just because of the work that we do with people who are very different from the focus on this call that we're not that affected by any of this, not to a great degree in terms of COVID. We're very lucky, although probably people on this call that have friends or relatives ill or die, but we haven't been knock down three rungs or two rungs on Maslow's hierarchy for the most part, but a lot of people have. So I think the biggest thing that's coming out of this is just greater empathy. People are actually examining, "Okay, let's look at my attitude. Let's look at my position. Let's look at what's going on, and let's rethink," and I think people have gone, "Okay, I can put myself in other people's positions. I cannot feel their pain, but I can imagine what that's like." And I think the most powerful thing out of this is going to be it's the time of reflection and it's a time when I think we'll ultimately become more empathetic even though you look at your social media feed and it doesn't [Laughter] necessarily feel like that, but I think that's the direction that we're going.

And I guess the other big thing is in a nation, yes, this sucks. Everyone's got a monkey wrench thrown into how they thought their next year or next five or next 10 year would go. It's not going that way, and we're going to have to figure out how to keep doing things that are essential, keep businesses driving forward, keep our clients happy, keep solving these situations, and it's going to – I already see it, lots of people changing how they do work and adopting new stuff. But I think another big piece of it was this is going to drive us three years, five years forward in terms of innovating and figuring out how to do stuff in a different way. So tough but I think there are some positives that will eventually come out of this. I think if we're honest and we keep our clients honest and fill that empathy gap, we maybe come out of this a whole lot better.

Lenny Murphy: Absolutely. Thank you. Guys, I've got to say this is the 13th one and everyone's different, but I've been incredibly impressed by your thoughtfulness and the empathy and compassion that you have all talked about so consistently through



this. The optimism, the support, so it's been nice. This has been a nice hour to spend not just because I enjoy talking to all of you, but because I kind of woke up a little freaked out. We're just going on vacation on Thursday, and I realized that I'm actually pretty anxious about that. We're driving to another state and leaving our safe space. I was like, "I don't know about all of this." And thank you, I feel calmer now through all of your input so...

Gregg Archibald: Same here.

Lenny Murphy: I appreciate it very much. We're out of time. I appreciate all of your time today. Appreciate our listeners. Everybody stay safe, stay sane, stay well, and we will come back again next week, but thank you all very much.