

# In Crisis Is Opportunity

***“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.” – Helen Keller***

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The last few weeks have been difficult, made worse by the fact that we know it is all about to get much worse in April. “America First” now means we are first in number of [coronavirus](#) infections, rate of infection and soon deaths. We are experiencing a new federalism in which not only do we not have a globally unified approach to a pandemic, but we don’t even have a national one. It is, so far, every state for itself.

During the 2008-09 financial crisis, there was a saying we oft-shared in the war rooms on Wall Street. “Everyone is a capitalist on the way up but a socialist on the way down.” The same is true now on the purpose of a strong and expertly-staffed federal government. “Everyone’s a critic on the way up, but a socialist on the way down.” We need federal government leadership and support. The unanimous vote on the latest stimulus bill shows, well, our uniformity on this newfound reasoning.

In speaking with lawyers, other agency and business owners, our staff, journalists and social and digital media experts, some new revelations and, dare I say, opportunities, are starting to emerge:

**Leadership is now local:** As you have read in this space many times before, crisis abhors a vacuum. Leadership is as local as your business. Reach out and touch someone inspirationally. In the absence of national “fireside chats,” business leaders need to step up and show direction. In crisis, you don’t need

to get everything right, but you need to act. Your employees, partners, suppliers and prospects need you. Call them. Have a plan. Execute.

**Fear is fine, panic is not:** I see it in the eyes and body language (on Zoom, of course) of the business owners and young people I speak with. Health is foremost on people's minds, but so is payroll and rent. "Will my business survive?" And for younger people who didn't work through 9/11 or the financial crisis, this is the worst crisis they have ever seen. For all of us, this period portends World War II courage and sacrifice. Fear is a healthy emotion. It motivates us and gives us the resolve to fight. It is rational. We have lots to be afraid about. But panic is fear untamed. While we use fear as fuel, panic robs us of everything from rationality to strength. The best solution for fear? Get on the phone. Talk to co-workers and clients. Reach out and help. Work. As the Roosevelts taught us, do not be still for that is where the demons lie.

**Journalists need business stories:** With the hundreds of journalists we have spoken with over the past two weeks, they need stories that relate to the coronavirus but are business- and beat-oriented. How are businesses surviving? What unique things are they doing? How are they expressing leadership? What are they doing that is planning for the recovery?

**Examples of vulture marketing are next:** Journalists and social media will soon pounce on stories about companies and individuals who used the pandemic for vulture marketing – taking advantage of fear and desperation. Usury, false cures, hawkish lawyers, for-profit debt consolidators, unsavory timeshare exit companies, the works. If your business takes advantage of people, you will likely become the fodder for lots of unwanted attention in the coming weeks as people are hungry for targets to blame.

**SEO is the opportunity:** As businesses worldwide cut their

costs, they are minimizing marketing. After all, it's not business as usual. But in doing this, they are abandoning Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This means SEO costs are lower than they have been in years. Now is the time to push content and SEO. It is cheaper and more accessible than ever. If you act now and implement your content and SEO strategy, you can influence the narrative when we come out of this for far less money and effort.

**Zoom press conferences and videos are here:** Hold a press conference on [Zoom](#) or [WebEx](#). Have a video team record interviews by webcam. Distribute it by a private newswire. New challenges mean new opportunities. The only time news stops is the day after the end of the world; even then there is likely to be a summary edition.

**Scrutiny of bailout beneficiaries:** Regardless of whether it's called a stimulus or a bailout, journalists are about to start scrutinizing which large companies received stimulus funds, how they spend their money, their history of CEO compensation, stock buybacks and fidelity to austerity pledges. There will be a fight over transparency, but companies should expect it to become public information.

**New broadcast to reach general counsels:** To help our clients, friends of the firm and other readers of this newsletter, we are launching a new daily five-minute audio podcast for the [Corporate Counsel Business Journal](#) called **In House Warrior**, to reach the general counsels at most American companies. We have built a home studio so we can record guests by telephone and computer. If you want to be on the air with us, please email me at [rlevick@levick.com](mailto:rlevick@levick.com) and provide the topic. We will do our best to line you up for a show.

Over the past two weeks, I have been presenting speeches on multiple webinars and broadcasts, including the one here, produced by our friends at [TEK Group](#) (who provide online newsrooms, which are another great resource, especially during

this challenging time). They interviewed more than 40 PR and crisis industry executives for our input on how to address the crisis and just hosted a 24-hour news stream of communications advice. The interviews will be available on-demand. Stay tuned.

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