



How 5 MSPs

Increased Revenue By An Average Of

\$2,133,428

And Increased Profits By

\$646,115

In 2020

2021 Better Your Best Contest Essays



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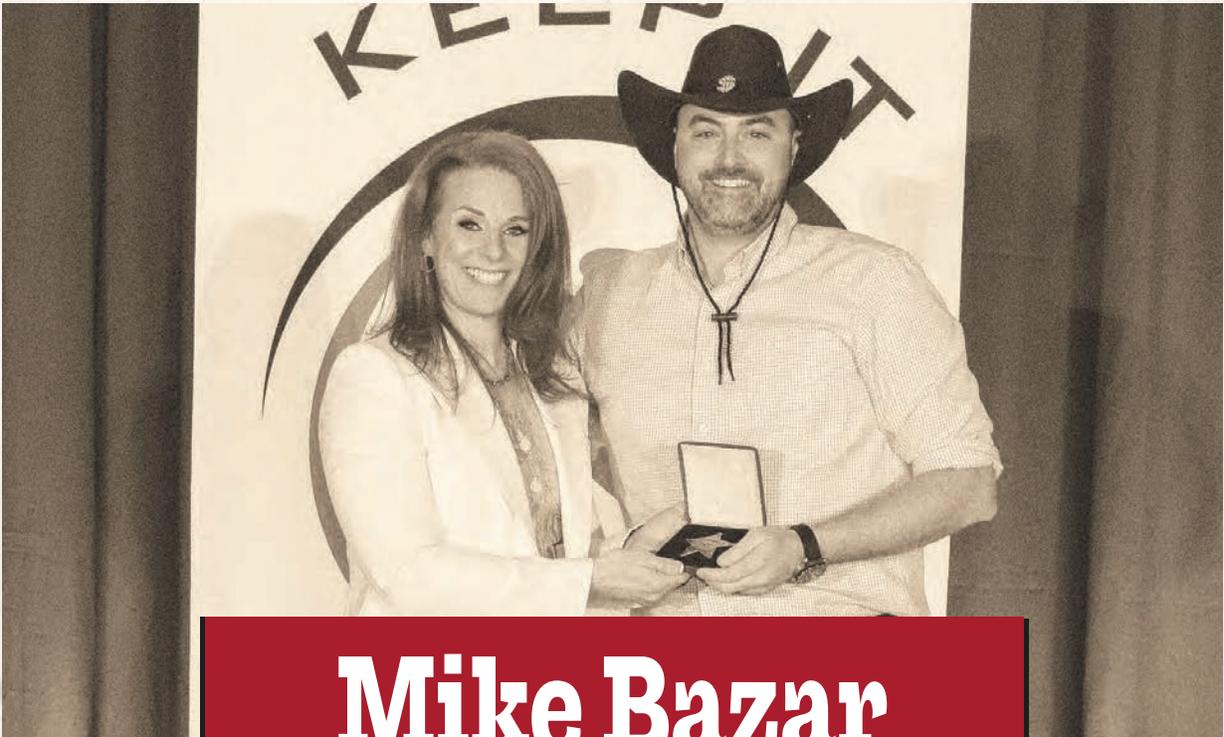
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2021

"Better Your Best"

Contest Essay



Mike Bazar

Bazar Solutions, Inc.

Revenues Up

\$951,166

Monthly Recurring Revenue Up

\$33,000

Profits Up

208%

The Ending:

Why am I writing this essay? Why do I want to be the Better your Best Spokesman? Have you ever prepared to tell your kids that you couldn't afford Christmas? Have you ever known you could do more, should do more, but just couldn't get over the hump or get out of your own excuses? I have. I want to help others avoid it. Thanks to Robin and the TMT team, I've cracked the code, had the epiphany, and can solve all their problems. I finally figured out "The One Thing" to save every IT Entrepreneur from poverty. Read on to find out what "The One Thing" is...

Where it started:

I graduated college in 2002 with a Mechanical Engineering degree and I was a computer nerd by hobby. Sitting around doing CAD drawings all day didn't sound like my cup of tea, so I applied to any jobs that sounded fun and were related to engineering. I even applied to a job with Raytheon to work in Antarctica for 8 months! I figured I could just write a check and pay off my student loans when I returned because what the heck can you spend money on in Antarctica!

As it tends to do, life happened. While looking for a job, I had an opportunity to start doing IT consulting work for a neighbor, and Bazar Solutions was born. I basically did work for his business (a large multi-location business) and maybe two or three others. I made goodish money but was stuck 'in' the business. More life happened and I met a girl, who I married several months later. While we planned for the wedding, I realized that married life sounded expensive, and ramen just wouldn't cut it. I decided I needed more consistent income and took a job working with IT in mining. Think big bulldozers that make the ground shake. I got to work on big kid toys! My job was to both to sell and install big wireless networks in open pit mines. We built the technology backbone for what has now become fleet automation, and were on the cutting edge of doing so. The job was fun and I learned tons working with Fortune 500 companies.

Then the financial crisis happened. Mining was in a downturn, I had a new son, and was tired of constant travel (home 5-10 days a month). My wife and I worked hard to save some money and in December of 2009 I jumped ship to restart the IT business. I figured the best time to start a business was in the middle of a financial meltdown. Turns out, I was right!

I wanted to start the business out on the best footing possible, so the very first thing I did, was go to an MSP University event because it was near me, and it was free! That event helped me to start the business as an MSP from the get go, not pure play MSP, but focused on MRR over 'quick wins'. I grew the business the first few years the way most IT people do, word of mouth, referrals, and a little bit of cold calling. I'm good at developing rapport and did well. In that first year I did just over 100k and then grew 194% going into year two. From 'Go' to year 5 we averaged 107% growth per year, breaking the million dollar mark in under 5 years (we went from \$650k to \$1.5 Million in year 5). Our margins were lower than they should have been, but I had all kinds of excuses about why I couldn't, or shouldn't, make more.

It's easy to talk about the wins and not talk about the sacrifices you made to get there. Our first year, we wouldn't have had Christmas for our kids if my in-laws didn't give us money to spend on presents. If you ever want to feel like a failure in your personal life, just imagine telling your kids that Santa won't be stopping by this year because of your choices. Then, in 2012, our oldest son had a seizure and was diagnosed with Occipital Epilepsy, which is where an electrical storm fires off in the back of their brain and cascades through the rest of the brain, causing seizures. I've never felt more helpless in my life than holding him in my arms while we waited

for an ambulance to show up. For the next couple months, while we adjusted to the news, I went through all the emotions of what he might miss out on and asked all the crappy questions. Should I quit this business and get a 'real job' with insurance? Will his brain heal? What will the medication do to him? But, God has grace and after we put him on medication he never had another seizure. He's been off medication now since 2014 and still, no sign of any issues. Occipital epilepsy is one of the few that kids can out grow



and we believe he's been fully healed. During those first couple months I knew that I wanted to control my own destiny and that my wife and I didn't want a 'lifestyle' business. My 'why' for the business became my family. I wanted to have something that would allow me to make memories with them and provide whatever they needed. As Dave Ramsey says, "Live like no one else, so later you can live like no one else."

After about 5 years, things went stagnant with basically zero growth! Have you ever had a really good run and you're just holding on for dear life? You want to stop, circle the wagons, sort things out, and then get back to selling and growing. That is what was happening to our business. No real process. No scalability. No real marketing. I needed help, so I went to Robin's Bootcamp - Robinopoly. I was amped up when I left. But when I got back to the office things returned to the same old way we had been doing it. No Accountability to change things. This happened for a couple more years of working IN the business and 'I can't afford Producers Club'. Somewhere along the way I bought the toolkit, read about 10 pages then placed it on a shelf – see, typical IT company! I did listen to all the CD's that got sent out, the interviews that Robin did, and got a lot of great information out of those. While I didn't go make changes like I should have during those first couple boot camps, we did make 2 great changes. The first was we put a form on the website. I didn't get a lot of leads, but I got one that has tuned into \$15k / month plus a ton of hardware sales. The second great thing from bootcamp was Mike Michalowicz and Profit First. His presentation one year really struck home and made me realize I was doing finance wrong. I needed to be more intentional with costs and profit. Since I heard him speak and read Profit First, we have setup several accounts and take a regular distribution every quarter, plus I don't sweat tax time.

Now you might ask, "how do you become more intentional with your business?", and knowing who the readers of this essay are, you probably have some great ideas. For me, I was missing accountability and someone to call my excuses out as the BS they were. Robin is great at verbally assaulting all your excuses, but I still needed accountability. So in 2017, I joined Producers Club, we had a good 2016 and I could finally 'afford' it (I hadn't realized I couldn't afford NOT to join). What's really funny is that I called my wife to talk it through with her, and her answer was basically, "you've been saying you should do it for 2 years, so just do it". AKA – Shit or get off the pot. She probably should have called me a moron for not doing it years earlier...

Looking at our numbers for 2017 and '18 you might think it wasn't as helpful as it was. 2017 was a bit of a kick in the teeth. That summer, a school client was told to spread out purchases more, so we lost about \$300k-\$350k in annual hardware sales (but kept the MRR!). Then at the end of 2017, we also lost about 15k in MRR from a couple big customers. We spent 2018 rebuilding that revenue and I made myself believe I couldn't afford to do more marketing. We updated our website, built lists, did some marketing, but not as consistent as we should have.

Early in 2019, I attended a Rapid Implementation Workshop and hired a sales pro that I knew was amazing and I couldn't afford. You might ask, why would I hire a guy I "couldn't afford"? Well, I couldn't afford NOT TO. When you find talent, scoop it up, and scoop I did. Jake is the real deal sales hunter. The accountability groups and quarterly 'work on the business' time has been amazing. Our business has gone on from a flat 2017, rebuilding MRR in 2018 to 30% growth in revenue from '18 to '19 and then 52% growth in 2020. Our margins went from a \$40k loss in 2017 and down \$45k in '18 to almost \$350k in profit during 2020. In the middle of a global pandemic, using what we learned from TMT, we grew our business – a lot (we added a million dollars in revenue in 2020).

Jim Collins, of Good to Great fame, talks about a flywheel. Marketing is a flywheel. It's momentum that builds over time, one push at a time, leading to an amazing amount of power. Technology Marketing Toolkit, and specifically Producers club has forced me to keep pushing the wheel. To start, it was in short bursts, little pushes on the flywheel. Through PC meetings and my accountability group, I have grown as a leader and pushed more consistently on the flywheel, and the results built. 2021 is going to be freaking amazing (we have closed over \$8k in MRR already in January).

Every part of my business is better because of Producers Club. 100% it's the best thing for any IT company to do. My focus has shifted so much from being "in" the business to working on the business. Building a better team, holding people more accountable, getting everyone pushing the flywheel in the same direction. This is why I want to be the spokesperson for Technology Marketing Toolkit. I've finally figured out THE ONE THING that everyone needs to do. It's the Work. Do the marketing work and you will grow. Do the pricing and process work and you will make more money. Do the team building work and you can change the lives of your employees. Do the work and you will build a legacy you can be proud of. Do the work and all your goals are reachable. Producers Club will strip away all your excuses and force you to get after it. Robin will get on stage every quarter with world class speakers and motivate you to do the work. She will get in your face if you need it. She won't let you feel sorry for yourself because a client left or a staff member that was 'key' left. She will help you build your team because you can't do it all alone. The community will show up, help you, and push you. They will make you achieve things you never thought you could. Push that flywheel, do the work, results will follow.

The Marketing:

I have tried to be sales focused as long as I've run the company, but the truth is I failed at it a lot of the time. I was reactionary, got sucked into service issues, and made mediocre hires that I was too slow to fire. Since joining Producers club, I have focused more on the business, taken time to create more process and improve HOW we do things. Our marketing used to consist of the most popular strategy of all time – a hope and a prayer. Then sitting in a PC session where Robin was talking about making oil wells, it hit me. I couldn't just 'turn up' anything and get more leads. I was still stuck in 'a hope and a payer' marketing. Since then, we have worked to implement oil wells we could 'turn up' when needed. Here is what we regularly ran in 2020:

- Paper Newsletter to approx. 200 clients and top prospects – I know of at least one deal we landed in 2020 because of these newsletters. A few prospects have talked about getting them, but one very specifically pointed out the newsletter as to why they called.
- Infusion Soft – Tech Tips emails to ALL THE PEOPLE. Clients, Prospects, Trade show lists, they all get it. These tech tips have led to several conversions of existing clients to O365 and opened the door to a few conversations about various upgrades at clients. We have signed up 2 new clients off leads from our Tech Tips, in addition, to the extra services we have signed up existing clients for.

- List Scrubbing! We have gotten a couple great sales just out of scrubbing the list. We got an appointment with the country club that we are still working on, and that led to a referral from them, to a local municipality that we signed up to start Jan 2021.
- Aspirin Campaign – We ran Aspirin for most of the year, we stopped when everyone shifted to work from home, and then started it back up towards the end of the year. With the limited runs we did this year, we still got 9 leads out of it, 3 of which signed up for services, and the others we are still treating as leads with other drip campaigns.
- Pi Day - On March 14th (Pi Day 3.14) we delivered Pies to all our clients – this was in 2019, we didn't run it in 2020 because of Covid and everyone was working from home. It didn't seem like the right time to do it. We will run it in 2021
- QBR's – we hit our big clients regularly to talk new services or implementing new features on services they already have (O365 services they might not be using, etc). We looked to really add value. We added services to a few existing clients and converted at least 3 hourly customers to MRR
- This year we made a huge effort to 'Right Size' all our clients. Every client we have, that we never raised rates on, never resold our new plans to, etc. We were able to generate a few thousand in MRR
- Various other networking events and speaking gigs to local groups. This has lead to at least one new customer this year.
- Web – our web efforts have been really productive this year. We have at least 15 leads we can trace back to our web efforts. Sometimes it's hard to get exactly out of a customer if it was an ad, the local page or just SEO that got them to our website. But we managed to turn out at least 15 leads directly related to our web marketing efforts. 11 of these became customers.
 - Google Ads – We have been running Google ads for over a year, it's lead to quite a few leads and a few customers.
 - SEO – making small changes to the website to make sure it's "active" and we are working on re-doing the entire website now to be more SEO focused. We created a page for Work from Home resources and have added in some O365 tips as part of that. Trying to catch traffic around Work from Home.
 - Google Local page – I try to post to our local biz page in Google at least once a month and over the last year moved up so we pretty much always show up for any IT related search in Lubbock. We even showed up for VCR Service once because of 'Service'
 - Robinized Website and Forms – We have gotten at least 2 customers this year off website forms / reports. Plus, without a good SALES FOCUSED website (as opposed to eye candy), all the google ads and SEO traffic would be lost.
- Shock and Awe boxes – we got custom boxes printed up with our Logo and Customer Bill of Right on them. We put in a RTIC cup, some stickers, marketing materials and NERDS candy (get it... Nerds...). We don't track 'Shock and Awe' as a lead category since we send them out to any new 'good fit' leads, but I do know that it has helped open doors wider.
- Social Media – We have used Facebook to post news, tips, and other items out there as a general touch point. We have run a few ads on Facebook, but seems to have poor results. We want to look at how to improve that in 2021.
- Referrals – Good old referrals got us 18 leads in 2020.

The Numbers:

	2017 (Joined PC)	2019	2020	Growth (19 to 20)	'17 to '20
Revenue	\$1,419,305	\$1,815,431	\$2,766,597	52%	95%
Profit	-\$39,394.70	\$76,215	\$345,482	353%	976%
Leads	29	77	63	-18%	117%
Appts	23	77	56	-27%	143%
New Cust	24	35	36	3%	50%
MRR	\$61,486	\$112,000	\$145,000	30%	135%

These numbers are straight from QB, no adjusting for taxes, depreciation, or PPP. PPP is counted as income. I have a second chart at the end where I backed out depreciation, taxes, and PPP

A couple of notes on the numbers. First, I want to point out that most MSP's shouldn't have an excuse for lack of growth in 2020 (those in certain niches got killed and I get that). We are based in a town of 260k people (maybe 300k in the 'Metro'). We had the same hardships anyone else in the State of TX went through related to Covid. We compete with my brother – that's a long story, but our agreement is it's better to be brothers than competitors, so we don't steal clients – point being that I have 'walked away' from probably 10k in MRR because of it. So, in a midsized town, in the middle of a global pandemic, without any special advantage or super profitable niche, we killed our revenue and profit goals. Leads and Appts went down from 2019 for a couple reasons. First, Covid; and that's not some excuse, we just got less leads and appointments in the middle of the year as everyone tried to figure out what was going on. We paused Aspirin, but kept google ads and made a lot more calls. We pivoted to leading with VoIP and work from home and also added more services to existing customers. Our mid year marketing helped us have a HUGE end of year and a big Jan 2021 (over 8k in MRR by Jan 22nd). Second, we tried to focus on bigger customers, and that narrower focus helped to push profits up, but we had less leads because of it. Overall, we had a better close rate and closed more leads in 2020 than 2019.

The Lessons and Benefits

I don't think there is a business owner out there who doesn't learn something new every week, at least not if they are trying. I love the quarterly meetings and the guest speakers that come in. The information dump that happens every 3 months is amazing. Between my accountability group, world class speakers and networking, I learn so much every time I'm in Nashville. Taking what I have learned, I've been able to build a better business and a better team.

Business Growth – We are opening an office in Houston. All our process and tools has allowed us to let 2 tech's move to Houston this year and work remote, but we don't want to waste the opportunity to grow the business. By the end of Q1 2021 we will have marketing running in North Houston (Don't worry, I talked to Charles in my accountability group before we decided to do this. We are focusing on different verticals than him and if we run into any of his customers, we will stop marketing and tell them they are in good hands). Our team is excited to be able to target bigger fish in a bigger pond!

Tough situations - One very difficult situation that we had to deal with was an employee that was dying from cancer. She was our bookkeeper and had been with us for 5 years. Our success allowed us to give her time off for treatment, and when it became obvious she couldn't work anymore we gave her a generous severance and let her go so she could focus on her family. I don't know how I would have handled a difficult situation like that if I didn't have people in my accountability group to lean on for help.

Giving back – Success has allowed me to help donate to organizations like St Jude’s and One Voice Home, who helps rescue women from sex trafficking. We give very discounted support to a few local churches and we give the Boys and Girls club of Lubbock free support for all 5 locations. It’s important to me to help break the cycles of poverty that many can get caught up in.

Travel - I love to travel and share that with friends and family. I’ve taken my whole family, including my in-laws and my parents to Spain and Italy. It can make those trips harder, but it’s important to me that my kids have relationships with their grandparents and what better way, than to make memories traveling the world! Here is a quick recap of what running a better business has allowed me to do:

2017 – Broke my leg and the business kept rolling, Took a trip to Africa with my wife (no kids!!) and spent Christmas in Branson

2018 – Built a new house, took a trip to Argentina with my Dad, took a cruise with my family

2019 – Went to Italy in May and Spain in October with my family (wife, kids, in-laws and parents). We also took a huge road trip from TX to NY then down to Washington DC, Atlanta and back home.

2020 – I got to go fishing in Alaska with some of my accountability group, took the family on a road trip, went to Mexico with friends, and made an end of year trip to Disney World with the family.

2021 – I have a trip planned to Costa Rica in Feb, a trip to Africa with my Dad and oldest son in June, and I’m sure, I’ll plan something for the end of the year as Europe opens back up.



Barcelona with family



Fishing in Alaska with Adam, Darren, and Darren's oldest son

To Sum Up:

Let's circle back to the main question, "Why do I want to be the Spokesperson for Technology Marketing Toolkit". I've had an amazing run the last few years and ANYBODY can do it. I want to help people realize that you can't do it all alone. You need a community to help you build your team, to help push you towards goals. You need others to lean on when life sucks, people that have been there. If you're in IT, you need to have a group of others in IT, that you can piss and moan to at times, but those same people will help steer you straight. Not let you feel sorry for yourself. Yeah, it sucks you lost \$15k in MRR – How are you going to fix it? What's the work you need to do? What's the next goal post? What's the next objective? 20 mile march that \$15k back. Do the marketing, do the sales, do the work.

Our success was driven by Producers club and that's a great story to help compel people to sign up (lets be honest, you want someone that can help sell!). I enjoy helping people and letting them know all our "secrets" and I truly believe in the TMT group and the product. These last couple grand years would not be possible without the growth in myself, my team, and my business. And a huge driver in my business and personal success is Producers Club.

So, if I don't get selected, consider this a Thank You letter. My life is truly better because of Producers Club and the amazing community you have built.

Here's to 2021!



Disney with our #CoronaCanSuckIt shirts

Below numbers I have added back in Depreciation and Taxes, and removed PPP

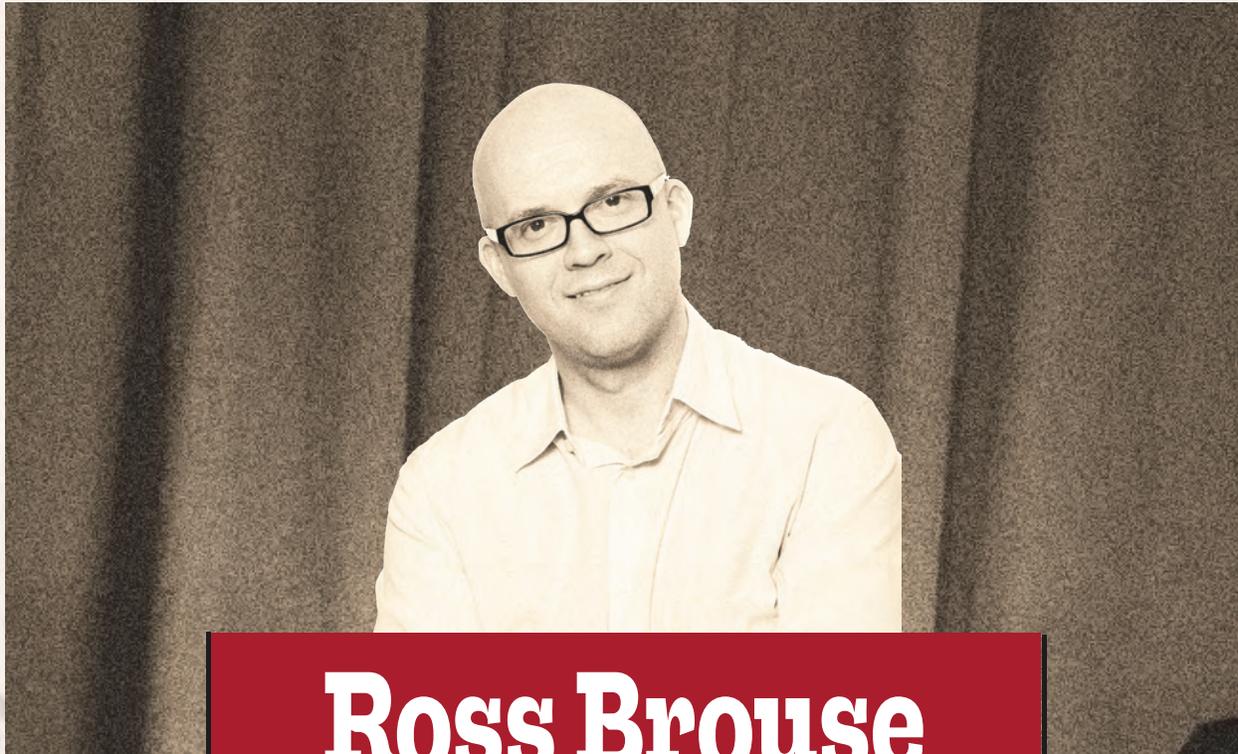
	2017 (Joined PC)	2019	2020
Revenue	\$1,419,305	\$1,815,431	\$2,766,597
Profit	-\$39,394.70	\$76,215	\$345,482
Depreciation / Taxes	\$38,061	\$69,712	\$9,092
PPP			\$125,100
Profit with Depreciation and state / local taxes added back and PPP subtracted	-\$1,333	\$145,928	\$229,474



2021

"Better Your Best"

Contest Essay



Ross Brouse

Continuous Networks

Revenues Up

\$1,211,775

Monthly Recurring Revenue Up

\$156,484

Profits Up

\$1,216,790

The Continuous Story

Better Your Best Contest Entry – The Year 2020

Alfred Hitchcock once said, “What is drama but life with the dull bits taken out.”

Prologue

Growing up in Minnesota in the 80s and 90s, I developed a passion for theater, movies and music. My parents would take me to Broadway style productions twice a month and enrolled me in violin lessons with one of the top music schools in the Midwest, where I played the violin and viola for more than 12 years. Throughout junior and high school, I held speaking roles in productions of *Oliver Twist*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Our Town*, to name a few. My senior year of high school, I had the fortunate experience of being an intern on the set of the 90s cult classic television show, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. It was that experience that energized me to apply to film school. 3 years later, I became a graduate of New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts with a degree in Film and Television. Storytelling has always been at the core of my identity and in my 42 years of life, I have come to believe that narratives are what make life interesting and memorable.

The Story of My Past

It was the winter of 2015 and my business partner Jason had recently discovered Technology Marketing Toolkit. He convinced me we should buy it, mostly because of what Aaron Leicht had done to sell him on it. I was skeptical, but I figured, what the hell... Let’s give it a try. We attended Bootcamp that year and after seeing the content and hearing the speakers, I was energized! I remember seeing Jay Ryerse win the Mercedes and thinking to myself, wow, that looks exciting! We joined Producer’s Club right there at Bootcamp. After handing over my credit card, Jeff Johnson handed me a black jacket with “Producer’s Club” embroidered on the breast. I remember thinking, “Cool. I am in the club!”.

At the time, marketing was not my focus. In fact, I spent most of my time designing complex cloud environments and working with existing customers on big technical issues. I was far more of a CTO than I was a CMO. Even so, we had made the investment in the Toolkit and Producer’s Club, so I needed to get my money’s worth. I agreed to be part of a weekly Producer’s Club Accountability Group called Big Guns, which was run by Charles Henson. wasn’t interested in doing the marketing work, I really just wanted the results.

And results there were! By late 2016, we had closed more than \$50,000 in new monthly recurring revenue from 4 new clients and the demand for my technical focus

became frantic. I soon stopped participating in the weekly accountability calls and even stopped attending the quarterly Producer's Club meetings. I took on managing all technical onboarding, all projects and designing and delivering services we had never provided before. I was working 16-18 hours a day, 7 days a week and quickly losing my mind. I became short tempered and irritable with my colleagues, my kids and my wife. I had lost more than 60 lbs of weight in 2015 and 2016 and I was quickly adding it back on. Even so, the enormous weight of even the idea of more clients was too much for me to bear. I begged Jason to stop all marketing and sales as I just couldn't handle the workload. By the summer of 2018, we had stopped all marketing, stopped all selling and we were beginning to lose clients. We were struggling to deliver our services; we were having issues with several of our employees and we were ending each month with negative profit. I was at my wits end. Something had to change...

The Story of My Change

Note: I may refer to this as "My Change", but really this was a change in myself, Jason (my business partner) and our entire team. I cannot take credit for the positive things that have happened as they would not have been possible without the ideas, the contributions and the hard work of the entire Continuous team. If I did one thing right, it was simply that I chose to hire the people I did, as it was those people who created the true progression we have experienced.

I had grown tired of being the Jack-of-all-trades and I wanted something different. In August of 2018, I took over as the captain of the accountability group I had ditched for a life of technical hell a year prior. My goal was to bring structure to our weekly calls utilizing the "Level 10 Meeting" format (more on that later). I wanted to motivate each member of the group to track a weekly scorecard, set quarterly rocks and achieve very specific annual sales and marketing goals. Earlier that year, we had agreed, with the rest of our accountability group, that we would implement "Traction" or EOS (Entrepreneurial Operating System) in our business. We tried to do this on our own for several months but without the guidance and structure of a coach, we were flailing.

That September, we hired a "Traction" coach by the name of Ryan Giles. For many years, Ryan ran an MSP out of Gulfport, Mississippi, and given his experience in our space, we knew he would be the right coach for our company. Ryan taught us all about several key disciplines that would prove to be vital to our future growth including the Level 10 Meeting, the Vision/Traction Organizer, the 5-5-5 and the Core Value system, to name a few. Most importantly, Ryan taught us that motivation wanes and that quarterly planning is key as it keeps us on track to our yearly goals. In between, it would be the disciplines like weekly Level 10 Meetings, Same-Page Meetings and Clarity Breaks that would keep us disciplined and on track. We began implementing all of these processes in our business in late 2018 and consistently met

with Ryan every quarter to assess the previous quarter, plan the upcoming quarter and resolve our internal issues through a process called “Identify, Discuss and Solve”. Near the end of 2018, we had begun to develop a few solid processes and had started to create some motivation with our team. At the time, there was an overwhelming skepticism about Traction and that it was simply a fad we would not continue. Even so, I knew in my heart that this was the puzzle piece I had been missing for so long.

In November of 2018, I attended the 25th Rapid Implementation Workshop in Franklin, Tennessee. While it was a requirement of being a Captain, it was also something I wanted. I needed to go back and learn the fundamentals of marketing and rebuild the marketing and sales momentum we had destroyed in 2017 and 2018. In January of 2019, after 8 weeks of dedicated marketing work, I won the Silver Challenge Coin for second place in my class. Winning that coin was a confirmation that I was doing what I needed to and that I was creating the momentum that would be required to grow Continuous Networks for years to come. The next month, after a year of employing the wrong salesperson, who cost our business well over \$150,000 in salary and draw against commission, I fired him and took over sales.

Looking back, when someone would ask me if I was in sales, I always answered the question incorrectly. I was always a “tech” and never thought of myself as a salesperson. Salespeople seemed slimy to me and I went around with the disregarding belief that they were all selfish and disconnected from the realities of a business. Now it was my time to take on this challenge and see for myself what it was like to be tasked with generating new business. The only resources I had by my side was a list of prospects who did not know who Continuous Networks was and had never spoken with me before, a telemarketer who could not land an appointment if his life depended upon it and me, a tech who now had to do sales. Fortunately, I did have a few of tricks up my sleeve that would later prove to be 3 of the defining elements of our current success.

In March of 2019, I hired Joe. You know that moment when you realize you just met someone you had been searching for so long? I don’t mean that in a creepy or romantic way, but rather just a human finding another human... some piece of your puzzle that if you made the right choices, you would ultimately find. Well Joe was one of those pieces. Joe was different than any salesperson I had met before. I didn’t have to sell him on his comp package or how great it would be to work for Continuous, but rather he worked to sell me on why I needed to give him a shot. At first, I pushed back and told him, because he wanted to work remotely, that I didn’t think things would work out. He didn’t give up and he continued to call me and email to explain why he was worth it. It worked. I offered him the job of Inside Sales, 1 year to date before the Coronavirus lockdown would begin.

Now that Joe was onboard, I thought perhaps he would motivate and challenge my existing telemarketer (we'll call him Chad) to improve. After only 4 weeks of calling, Joe had already generated 3 first time appointments with my dirty list of prospects. 4 weeks after hiring Joe it was Joe (3) and Chad (0). I sat Chad down the next week and let him go. After being in charge of sales for 2.5 months, not much had happened outside of my new hire. I was doing my best to inspire, motivate and challenge Joe to help me get appointments, but they were few and far between. The fact is, I was depending upon Joe to utilize his current skillset to sell an idea he was unfamiliar with. I had not yet given him "The Message" that I wanted to send to my prospects.

In May of 2019, I hired Mark. Now that I was running Sales and Marketing and I had attended a few appointments, there was no way I could keep up with running around to sales meetings and doing all of the marketing work at the same time. Mark was fresh out of school and eager to learn. I knew he would need a lot of guidance and direction, but more importantly, I believed he would bring energy to the position and to the marketing department.

At the July 2018 Producer's Club meeting, Robin unveiled her Customer Success Scorecard. Additionally, she challenged us to build our own scorecard and use it with our clients and prospects. She explained to us that those who accepted the challenge, would present their scorecard at the October Producer's Club meeting. Robin had always guided us to use assessments as a way to sell managed services and the idea of creating a condensed technology assessment by way of a scorecard, always intrigued me. As I had just taken over as Captain of my Accountability Group, I wanted to start with a challenge and so I encouraged every member of my Accountability Group to help me design a set of evaluation points that we could put on a scorecard to be used in sales meetings. Three months later, as one of 3 members who made a submission, I introduced my scorecard to Producer's Club.

In late 2018, my sales were a mess and I had not yet generated any results. Now it was June of 2019, I had a team of 3 and I needed to generate activity. I sat down with Mark and told him; "I want to use the Scorecard as part of my first-time appointment process". The idea, in every sales meeting, is to uncover pain, and I believed that the Scorecard would help me do that. Joe was beginning to generate more appointments from our cold list, and I was having trouble scheduling follow-up meetings with the prospects I was meeting with. I was finding it really difficult to discover anyone who actually seemed interested in managed services. So many of them already "had a guy" or worked with an IT vendor. Many of them had existing IT staff. I had begun to feel like snake-oil salesman, and it was discouraging.

As the year dragged on, I began to make changes to the Scorecard process. The evaluation points were the same, but how I presented it began to change. I thought to myself, maybe it's not that people are not interested in buying, but rather that I have not given them a compelling reason to do so yet. When I conducted my sales

meetings, I tried to focus on asking them questions about their business, relating what they would say to potential pain points and then circling that back to financial impact. Most prospects would agree with my logic and reasoning, but they would still show me to the door after 30 minutes with no follow-up scheduled. To make matters worse, none of them would flat out tell me “NO, I am not interested”. I knew that when they would tell me “We’re fine”, that they were either lying to me, lying to themselves, or both. Even so, I knew that the only way to sell them would be to build trust, and that trust would only come from several meetings where we could get to know each other, I could uncover their pain and then show them a better way of achieving their goals.

It was late summer of 2019 when I made my first major change to “The Scorecard”. I had already been using a spreadsheet to track my prospects answers, but now I needed to create something tangible they would walk away with. I also needed something that would guarantee me a follow-up meeting. When we had conducted technology assessments in the past, we had always delivered a report to the prospect with their results. I needed to do the same with the Scorecard and so I got to work on building a process.

Throughout October and November, my sales meetings were changing. Joe was consistently delivering 2+ new first time prospect appointments every week and the conversations I was having with those prospects was improving. Instead of just letting my prospects evaluate themselves against my 50-point Scorecard, I was now relating it back to specific business impact and then leaving each meeting with a booked follow-up meeting to present the results of the Scorecard. At the December 2019 Producer’s Club meeting in Orlando, I presented my Scorecard process in the Golden Cone competition and won!

The Story of 2020 The Year of CyberSCORE

We had posted nearly a half a million-dollar loss in 2019, after investing money into new staff, countless trainings and processes and new software. Even so, I was riding high after my 4th quarter success and I was excited to take the next steps with my Scorecard process. In late 2019, Joe, Mark and I got together and decided that the Scorecard process needed a new name. We wanted something that was memorable yet indicative of what it was, a precursor to a technology assessment, or better yet, a foundational step to building new client relationships by showing them how we think and what that level of thinking can do for their business. And so, CyberSCORE was born.

Our annual EOS planning meeting with Ryan was coming the 3rd week of January and I looked forward to setting our Annual goals and quarterly ROCKS. 2020 promised to be a big year after

all that we had done in 2018 and 2019 to build our marketing foundation. On the second day of meeting with Ryan, I received a call. It was my mom. My dad was in the hospital. We ended our meeting early that day and I spent several hours talking to him and to my mom. He was in good spirits, was eating and seemed as strong as he had been at any point over the last couple of years. My parents live in Minnesota so I would only get to see them twice a year. Since my father was no longer able to travel, that twice had become once. My father had been suffering from heart disease since the late 90s and over 2018 and 2019, it had become progressively worse.

The next day, I received the call that I knew would eventually come and that I had dreaded for so many years. "Your father just passed away", my mom said, choking back tears. "He went peacefully, and he had all of us by his side." My mom is the strong type, rarely showing emotion. It was apparent as she said those words to me, that a huge part of her world had just vanished. I sat there in silence for what seemed like an eternity, not finding the right words to say. After maybe 30 seconds, I said the only thing that came to my mind, "I'll be on the first flight tomorrow... and I love you."

My father was the provider, the money and the decision maker when it came to most things growing up. Without him, my mom would have to learn how to pay the bills, manage the money and take care of herself. For the prior 43 years, they had been together, and she had enjoyed the benefit of their partnership. This would be a radical shift for her, and she needed our help. For several weeks, my brother and I stayed with her. We helped her plan the funeral, we figured out all her finances, we made sure she would have enough money coming in and even leased her a new car. It was certainly not the way I had planned to start the banner year I was looking forward to, but it was the card God dealt me and I had to make the best of it. My wife and daughters joined me for the funeral and the final days of my trip. On our flight back to New Jersey, I noticed people on the plane wearing masks. This crazy virus I had been hearing about was making its way from China and Europe and was beginning to affect our country. Little did I know what was coming.

It was challenging to bring my mind back to work. The quarter was half over, and I had accomplished very little. After coming home, I was able to attend 5 or 6 new sales appointments, but my mind was on other things. I kept trying to remind myself what my father would say to me as a kid... "Are the decisions you are making working for you? If they aren't, make a change." At this point, there were several things not working:

- My Scorecard, now CyberSCORE was not working as well as I wanted it to
- I was spending too much time traveling around to meetings, many of which were not as impactful as they needed to be
- I was ignoring other areas of my business that needed my attention
- I was struggling to find my groove after the rocky start to the year

I'm a disorganized soul in the body of an organized person. That means that I have to work twice as hard to remain accountable to my disciplines and that I need a quarterly re-alignment in order to remain on track with my projects and goals. I knew I had to get out of my funk and

get focused quickly if I wanted to salvage 2020. I had spent the last several weeks thinking about how to build the CyberSCORE process and so one weekend in mid-February, I sat down and wrote out my thoughts. I was not looking for several disparate marketing campaigns or ideas, but rather to build a funnel of prospects that would buy because what I was offering was different than everyone else. Creating differentiators in a market like New York metro is challenging and I was committed to the belief that building my CyberSCORE would be the start of that differentiator. All of the meetings I had conducted to date provided me with significant data that I felt had proven my theory, “Business owners and leaders are lying to themselves about their own technology health so that they do not have to face the costs and disciplines required to achieve technology success.” Where my theory was incorrect, it simply meant that instead of lying to themselves, those business owners and leaders were simply oblivious to the technology world around them. CyberSCORE had to prove that not only did we know how to uncover all the hidden costs and dangers within a company’s technology, but that we also had a fantastic process to overcome them and avert potential loss. I also wanted to make sure that we never conducted a first-time appointment without a guaranteed second appointment. This would keep me in front of the prospect, moving the sales process forward.

In late February, I conducted my first appointment using my new CyberSCORE Step 1 Process, which works like this.

1. Introduce myself and set the tone for the meeting.
2. Inform the prospect I would be asking them 3-5 questions about their business and that I would also give them an opportunity to ask me a few questions when I was done learning about them and their business.
3. Utilize no more than 3-5 probing questions before asking the inflection point question, which was, “If I were to ask you to rate your overall technology health on a scale of 1-50, 1 being the worst and 50 being the best, how would you rate yourself?”
4. Regardless of their answer, follow-up this question with, “I have a unique process called CyberSCORE. It takes approximately 15-20 minutes and when done, you will know exactly what your score is. Does that sound like a waste of your time?”
5. Conduct the CyberSCORE
6. When done, assure them that there are no costs involved and that all you are asking for is a 1-hour follow-up appointment to present them with their score and a list of your expert recommendations.
7. Book the follow-up meeting immediately and require that a decision maker be present for that meeting.

At the second meeting, I would conduct the CyberSCORE Step 2 Process, which works like this.

1. Thank them for having you back and remind them of the scorecard you conducted at your first meeting called CyberSCORE.
2. Explain that this will take approximately 1 hour and that you would like their undivided attention. You will be talking about things that are hyper-critical to their business security and efficiency.

3. Follow the CyberSCORE presentation document, which outlines the 5 Key areas of technology success and their respective score in each area.
4. Focus on the weakest areas and use examples and analogies to drive home your points.
5. Show them where prospects go from here, whether it's a technology assessment engagement or more appropriately, a managed service engagement.
6. If they show interest, book a third meeting to perform a discovery and discuss what an engagement would look like.

The process was a success. Where I had found that conducting the CyberSCORE assessment uncovered pain points, presenting the business risks around those pain points generated more meaningful conversations. This CyberSCORE process was illustrating Continuous Networks as an expert in technology success disciplines. Best of all, my new method guaranteed my second meeting.

When the lockdowns came on March 15, we found ourselves ready. We had developed a process that could be conducted over Zoom or Microsoft Teams and our telemarketing efforts did not depend upon prospects being in their offices every day. Additionally, we had already moved to a 100% remote workforce the previous fall, so there was little change required from our side to adapt. From March 15 to April 15, we brought on 3 new clients using our new CyberSCORE process. Our success continued into May and June as we brought on an additional 3 clients using the same process.

At Virtual Bootcamp in April, I had the fortunate opportunity of participating in Donald Miller's talk on his StoryBrand concept. Having been a student of film and tv, what Donald had to say left an impression on me. The concept was simple. Every relationship Continuous Networks had with a client was a story. The client was the hero, and we were the guide. To put it in terms Star Wars fans understand, our client was Luke Skywalker and Continuous Networks was Yoda. After Donald finished speaking, I sat and thought to myself, "Had all those years of studying writing and directing not been a total waste?" "Was that \$150,000 in tuition and all the loans my parents and I had taken, actually worthwhile?" "Was hearing Donald Miller put this idea into such simple terms, the turning point of my story?" I immediately went back to my CyberSCORE presentation and made every necessary tweak to focus purely on the aversion of loss and the solution I could bring to solve my client's pain. Additionally, I had been looking for an idea on how to transform the messaging on our web site. I remembered one of the evaluation points on Robin's Client Success Scorecard that states: When a prospect comes to your website, they can INSTANTLY understand what you do and WHO you do it for. This was a significant point of weakness for our web site and it was immediately apparent that StoryBrand was my way to solve the problem!

In June, we closed on an acquisition of a Managed Service Provider in Staten Island, New York. They brought on more than \$100,000 in additional monthly recurring revenue and 6 new employees to our team. Most importantly, we had secured an arrangement to bring on the owner of that company as our new head of sales. Throughout July, August and September, I taught him all about CyberSCORE and the process we had built. He shadowed my sales

meetings and took notes. We would have long conversations afterward to talk about what I said and why. In October, he took over the primary sales chair and began conducting the CyberSCORE process on his own. In October, November and December, he has closed 3 additional clients using the CyberSCORE process.

In August, we engaged with Pronto to build a new Continuous web site around the StoryBrand process. We constructed a marketing blueprint that identified our client avatars, their pain points and our specific vertical focuses. At the end of 2020, we launched the new StoryBrand web site where prospects can INSTANTLY understand what we do and who we do it for.

The Results

Despite my rocky start, despite Coronavirus and despite bringing another company into our family, we found ways to build a unique process, differentiate our services and grow our business in 2020. After multiple years of losing money, were needed to make an enormous change to how we operated. 2020 proved to be the year that set us on course for our future.

Here is what we accomplished in 2020:

- New clients signed: 10
- New client MRR: \$33,565.15
- Profit: \$744,907.00
- Profit Increase from 2019 to 2020: \$1,216,740.00
- Increased project revenue by 68%
- Increased hardware revenue by 80%
- Acquired an MSP
- Fired all personnel who do not fit Core Values
- Hired 3 new Level 3 engineers
- 5 new engineers from acquisition
- Hired Director of Business Development
- Launched StoryBrand web site
- Increased Client Success Scorecard score from 83 to 92 out of 110
- Developed vCIO and QBR process that is generating consistent new project revenue
- Secured financing for 2m-4m dollar acquisition in 2021
- Completed second year of consistently running EOS as our business operating system

My Yoda

Looking back, I am confident that without the years of learning and experiences that Technology Marketing Toolkit has given me, I would never be where I am today. A lot of people focus on the campaigns Robin gives you, and while they are great and you SHOULD use them, they are not the true value behind being in Producer's Club.

I learn from doing and from personal experience. What Robin and her team have allowed me to do these past 6 years has been nothing short of amazing. They have brought us countless speakers like Robert Herjavec, Peyton Manning, Gino Wickman, Mike Michalowicz, Greg Crabtree and Buzz Aldrin. The ideas and concepts that many of these speakers have shown us have been transformative to Continuous Networks. Robin and her team have also given us opportunities to travel and learn from incredible individuals such as Chris Voss and Nido Qubein. I was fortunate enough to spend 2 days in a workshop and 12 weeks of weekly follow-up Zoom calls, learning from Chris and his son Brandon about using empathy to win arguments and close deals. I also spent 2 days touring High Point University and listening to Nido Qubein talk about how to make tough decisions and smart investments. Over the past year, we've been able to participate in one of the Producer's Club Greg Crabtree financial groups, and it has provided with a financial benchmark for our business. Every quarterly Producer's Club meeting and annual Bootcamp I attend; I take away incredibly valuable experiences and ideas that change the face of my business for the better. Most importantly, Robin and her team have allowed me to spend the last 2.5 years being the Captain of a group of my peers. There has been no greater experience than the time I have been able to spend with like-minded people who run businesses just like mine.

Robin and her team have truly been the Yoda to my Luke Skywalker. I didn't listen at first and thought I knew best. I cared more about my friends and my personal goals than the greater good of my company and my legacy. I had numerous failures and lessons learned along the way. I eventually accepted the wisdom of my marketing coach Robin and adopted her methods and disciplines, which led me to build my own methods and disciplines. Despite what I have learned, my journey has only just begun.

If you look at our web site, you'll find something we call our Continuous Better Sleep Guarantee. This guarantee states that you'll be much more at ease after enlisting Continuous Networks to elevate your business technology, and if you're not sleeping better in 90 days or less, we'll buy you a new mattress. At Continuous Networks, we don't sell technology solutions, we sell "Better Sleep". At Technology Marketing Toolkit, they don't sell marketing campaigns, they sell personal and professional growth.

The Continuous Story Continues

I am excited to be entering the Better Your Best Contest this year. After 6 years as a Producer's Club member, I finally feel like I have a story worth telling. 2020 was our best year ever and I cannot wait to show what 2021 produces. Our CyberSCORE process has been BIG for us and it will be even bigger in 2021, and the years to come. We have our sights on another acquisition target for this year and financing has already been secured. We've leveraged Pronto's Growth Management program and are meeting consistently each week to design, plan and build our digital and physical marketing efforts around Co-Managed IT. For the first time ever, we have a quarterly marketing budget and a fully functioning CRM that captures leads and allows us to efficiently manage our telemarketing efforts. With our new Director of Business Development onboard and producing, I am now able to focus on the overall growth of Continuous Networks and not be tied down by one specific area of the business.

Our 1-Year Plan (December 31, 2021) is to reach 6m in top line revenue with 1m in EBITDA (not including acquisition). Our specific measurables are selling at a 65% labor loaded gross margin (service delivery) with at least 50% actual gross margin, \$475K+ in monthly recurring revenue and non-recurring revenue of 15-18%. Our specific goals for 2021 are to complete another acquisition of a 2m-4m dollar MSP, hire 1-3 additional sales staff, have our CyberSCORE sales process automated and ensure our technology alignment and vCIO processes are 100% working.

Our 3-Year Picture (December 31, 2023) is to achieve 12m in top line revenue with 2.4m in EBITDA while maintaining the same gross margin figures outlined in our 1-Year plan. At that time, we plan to have a full time CTO, full time CMO and allow Jason and I to expand into new geographical markets and focus on strategic partnerships.

Our 10-Year Target is what we call Aloha 500. That means is that there will be at least 500 business owners and leaders who get better sleep because of Continuous Networks. When that happens, every employee of Continuous will get an all-expense paid trip to Hawaii!

Better My Best

Every day is about bettering what I did the day before. Growth is about never being comfortable with where you are while also appreciating what you have. When I began my change in 2018 and took over as the Captain of my accountability group, I adopted a mantra that has served me well ever since. Whenever I go off track, I use it to get things back on track. Whenever I need to motivate and inspire a fellow team member to improve their results, it becomes an incredibly useful tool. Whenever I want to accomplish something I have never accomplished before, it becomes the voice in my head that propels me forward. Why do I want to be the Spokesperson for Technology Marketing Toolkit? I want to continue my journey of helping and coaching others on what I have learned about the hidden value behind the

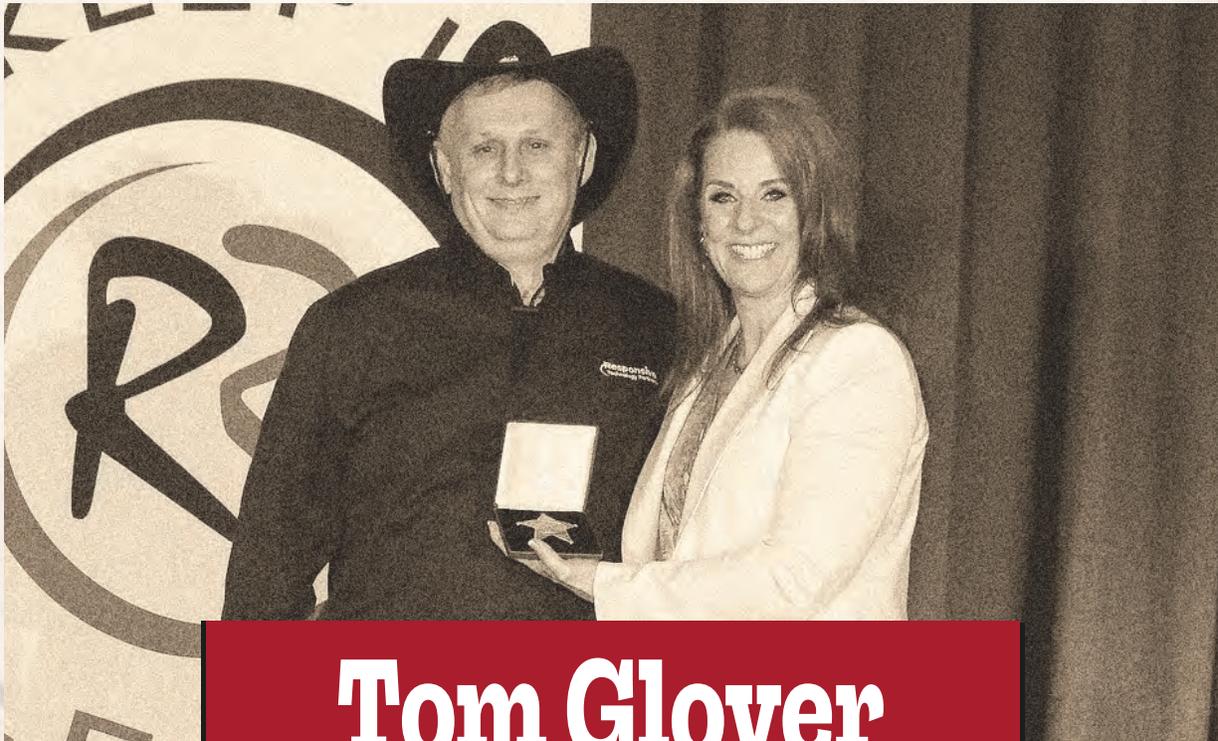
Technology Marketing Toolkit. I want to share my mantra of “Discipline, Consistency and Accountability” with all members of Producer’s Club and Accelerators Club, and help them achieve the mindset and belief system that has driven my success and will continue to be the momentum that shapes my future.



2021

"Better Your Best"

Contest Essay



Tom Glover

Responsive Technology Partners

Revenues Up

230%

Monthly Recurring Revenue Up

\$240,513

Profits Up

\$696,446

Wild Ride! Part II



You know, last year I stood up on the stage during the Better Your Best competition and I talked about the crazy wild ride that I had been on since 2018 growing my company from \$600K in total revenue to \$2.6M by the end of 2019... little did I know, that “wild ride” was just the warm-up. So, what did 2020 hold in store for me?

I know there are tons of companies out there who have true horror stories to tell about the devastating impacts of the pandemic to their employees, their customers and their bottom line. I count myself fortunate (NOT lucky) to say that we are not one of those companies. We did see challenges, like how to provide our services while keeping our employees safe and still meeting our contractual obligations and having every member of my family and almost every member of my team testing positive for COVID-19 at some time during the year. But that just about sums up the negative impacts that we saw to our business. Thanks to very good strategic planning, being able to rapidly adapt our marketing plan and having the wisdom to not just double down, but triple down on marketing, we managed to grow our core (Georgia) business by over 40% in 2020. With that organic growth and the acquisition of 3 like-minded companies, we grew our overall revenue by over 207% to surpass \$8M in revenue.

Some people tend to pooh-pooh growth through acquisition. But growing through acquisition is a valid strategy and one that we have implemented quite well. With each company we acquired, we diversified our customer mix and geographic footprint and added key leadership talent to fill gaps in our current team while maintaining a very healthy profit margin. For those who have gone through any type acquisition activity, they know that the process is long, tedious and sucks up a tremendous amount of time and energy. In 2020, we completed 3 acquisitions with 2 of the companies being similar size to our original Georgia company. While we haven't completely finished the integration of systems and processes, we have integrated the teams so that they are now working together to share knowledge, best practices and overall direction. We have also implemented a standard sales and marketing process across the company with both individual and market accountability built-in. By the end of 2021, we will have a 100% integrated operations team with common processes, platforms and ability to seamlessly assist customers, regardless of their location.

In the midst of completing these acquisitions and integrating the teams, we also rebranded the company from Pineland Cogentes to Responsive Technology Partners. There is no one single activity that can throw a monkey wrench into your marketing like rebranding can, especially where new markets are concerned. We missed nearly 3 months of marketing in 2020 due to the rebranding effort. However, it was 100% worth it, and I wouldn't change one thing!

While rebranding definitely impacted our marketing during the 3rd quarter, it still didn't stop us from having the most active marketing year ever. In 2020, we launched a new website, hosted 3 webinars, created 8 video blogs, sent out 5,250 print newsletters, executed 5 different direct

mail campaigns to 3,800 prospects with 9,500 follow-up phone calls, executed 3 canvassing campaigns to 100 prospects, made over 2,000 phone calls to existing customers during the first 3 months of the pandemic, executed 3 email campaigns, executed 10 different social media and Google campaigns and completed over 200 QBRs. And what were the results from all this activity? We generated 957 new raw leads, 381 qualified leads, sat 133 appointments and onboarded 76 new customers, increased our monthly recurring revenue by over \$50K (\$600,000 annual) and generated over \$3.7M in new opportunities (\$1.76M of which have closed and \$630K are still open).

While we hit just over \$8M in 2020, that number doesn't really reflect where we are today revenue-wise. Our first acquisition closed on February 1, 2020, so most of their numbers are reflected in the annual revenue. Our 2nd acquisition didn't close until July 1, 2020, so we only realized 50% of the revenue from that company. Our 3rd acquisition didn't close until October 1, 2020, so we barely saw any impact from their revenue. With our current contracted MRR and typical non-MRR billing, we are on a run rate of \$10.5M... that is over halfway to our 10-year goal we set in 2018 of \$20M and we did it in just 2 years! We are now on track to hit that \$20M goal by the end of 2023 (assuming no more acquisitions), 5 years ahead of schedule.

When I finally got onboard with Robin's program in early 2018, I was running a \$600,000 failing business. I was in debt to my father for over \$500,000, I worked all the time, missed so much time with my children that I will never get back and was stressed to the max. It still blows my mind at how much can change in just 2 years when you have the right guidance, right motivation and right team to support you. In the fall of 2020, Responsive Technology Partners was recognized by Inc Magazine as the 630th fastest growing business in America and the 18th fastest growing IT Management firm. I never would have imagined we would have that level of national recognition back in 2018. While I'm not 100% debt free (yet), I have been able to pay off what I owe my Dad and the other original investors in my company and made more money in 2020 than I have ever made before. I will be personally debt free by the end of 2022, with savings to pay for college for both my kids and investment income that will allow my wife to retire from her job. And, on top of all this success, I have been able to spend more time with my family and enjoy these last few years with my daughter before she leaves this fall for college.

Why do I want to be spokesperson for Technology Marketing Toolkit? I attended my first Bootcamp in 2019. As I listened to Satima, Charles, Bruce, Fred and Bob (maybe) ☺, I was so inspired to go out and kick some ass. I was just coming off winning my RIW class essay and seeing huge growth and really enjoying talking to peers about what I was doing and how it was affecting my business and personal life. It was at that point that I knew I wanted to be on that stage to inspire others. Last year I got that chance and, even though it was a virtual stage and I didn't win the car, I've been able to talk to so many business owners throughout 2020 and provide inspiration and mentoring that have helped them to start their own growth journeys. I've really enjoyed this outcome from BYB 2020 (although the car sure would have made it even more enjoyable). Technology Marketing Toolkit and Robin Robins have transformed the way I

run my business. The transformation goes so much deeper than just the marketing campaigns and processes in the toolkit. The push toward continuous learning, listening to amazing guest speakers at Bootcamp or the quarterly Producers Club meetings, reading the books that Robin and other speakers reference, interacting with some awesome fellow entrepreneurs and having my feet held to the fire to perform by my accountability group (and Robin) have all helped shape me as a leader and a business person and helped me to pave a course that would skyrocket this company to levels that none of us ever imagined! I would love to be able to share this journey with other entrepreneurs as your 2021 spokesperson and help inspire them to start their own journeys.

What have been the 2 biggest WINS you have seen from implementing marketing automation? With our large number of contacts in Infusionsoft (almost 6,000), we had thousands that were not being touched simply because we didn't have enough manpower or time in the day. Now, with marketing automation, it's like having an entire Infusionsoft team dedicated to keeping in touch with our clients, prospects, farm list, etc.

We have an easy way to access contacts that need cleaning so that we can always keep our lists as clean as possible. It makes it extremely easy to get extra help from interns because I can just point them to a list within a widget. The contacts also come up for cleaning in "My Day" so that they don't get forgotten or lost.

Marketing Campaigns

COVID-19 Customer Outreach

Our single most effective campaign in 2020 was an outbound calling campaign to our existing customers in Georgia. In March, April and May, our account manager called every customer in our database at least 2 times each month to check on them, make sure they were doing okay during the pandemic and see if they needed anything. Over the 3-month period, he made over 2,000 phone calls. During those calls, he invited them to watch our video blogs, let them know about our free secure remote access offer and free VoIP phone offer and also let them know about some of the refurbished laptop deals we had to help them with work from home. Not only did this campaign build tremendous customer appreciation and loyalty, it generated \$139,000 in new project work and equipment sales and \$66,000 in VoIP contracts.

COVID Resources for Community

This campaign was the gift that keeps giving. On February 21st we kicked off this educational campaign in partnership with the Chambers of Commerce in all the communities where we do business to provide much needed information to chamber members regarding topics associated with COVID-19 and working from home. We started with the first video blog about benefits of VoIP and how it could help them support work from home. Over the 18 week period, we produced 8 video blogs covering topics like Business Continuity, Going Back to Work post-COVID, Motivating Employees, Employee Security Training, Zero-Trust Security and COVID-

19 Related Security Attacks. We also hosted webinars for “Work from Home Strategies for Your Business” & “CARES Act Panel Discussion” and offered to provide free, secure remote access for any chamber member business that needed to implement a work from home strategy. Through this campaign, we generated 37 leads, added 20 new companies to our remote management platform and closed 1 Co-Managed IT contract with a total one-year value of \$48,105. Also, through this outreach campaign, Responsive Technology Partners was awarded the Bronze medal in the IT Management industry as part of Inc.’s 2020 Best in Business list – their first annual recognition program celebrating companies making the biggest impact on their communities, their industries, the environment, or society as a whole.

Quarterly / Annual Business Reviews

In addition to the COVID-19 customer outreach campaign, we continued to execute our Quarterly and Annual business reviews with our customers in 2020. We created multi-year IT budgets for customers to help them project annual IT expenditures and allow us to better forecast project and equipment revenue. Throughout the year, we completed just over 200 Quarterly or Annual Business Reviews and generated \$102K in revenue.

Closer Look Campaign

We ran the Closer Look Campaign in October and November of 2020, targeting 523 prospects in Georgia. We mailed 523 letters, made 1,400 phone calls, generated 6 qualified leads, sat 3 appointments, created 2 proposals that are still open for a total 1-year revenue of \$119,000 when the close.

Canvassing – Athens Businesses with Hot Chocolate

We opened a new office in Athens Georgia in September 2020. At the time we opened the office, we had 1 existing customer in that market and a handful of leads that we were working in the surrounding area. In December we ran a canvassing campaign targeting 28 businesses close by our new office, delivering a cup with hot chocolate mix, candy, and information about the company and our services. We generated 3 leads, sat 2 appointments, created 1 proposal, and closed 1 new client for a 1-year total revenue of \$9,813 revenue.

VoIP Campaign

Following the Q4 Producer’s Club meeting, I joined the Cytracom Mastermind group to work with Robin on developing a new VoIP campaign. In addition to the initial email campaign that Robin created, we also implemented a post card campaign to 2 new lists in Georgia and Florida as a way to both promote our VoIP product and to assist with cleaning the new lists. For both components of the campaign, we made up to 3 follow-up calls. As of January 2021, this campaign has generated 14 leads, 14 sat appointments, 14 proposals and 7, 36-month contracts for total revenue of \$154,177.

Monthly Newsletters

We printed and mailed our newsletter every month in 2020. When we started the year, our January newsletter went to just 293 clients and unconverted leads in Georgia. By the end of

the year, we were sending 800 printed newsletters to clients and unconverted leads in Georgia, Florida, North Carolina and Virginia. In total, we sent 5,250 print newsletters in 2020. While we cannot attribute any direct sales as a result of the newsletters, our customers have told us how much they enjoy them and how much they enjoy the company updates and employee and customer spotlights we include each month.

Other Campaigns Used:

- Shock-and-Awe Box to booked appointments
- Zero-Trust Security Webinar with ThreatLocker
- New Web Site with MAP 2.0, Leadfeeder and Google Analytics integration, with re-targeting enabled for Google and Social Media Ads
- Aspiring Campaign
- ThreatLocker Email Campaign
- 4-Big Problems Campaign to Local Government
- Computer Hammer Campaign & Video Ad to Milledgeville businesses
- 10-Around Drop Campaign + Get Out of Trouble Free Social Media Ad to Athens businesses
- Canvassing to Healthcare with 4-Big Problems Letter



2021

"Better Your Best"

Contest Essay



Neal Juern

Juern Technology

Revenues Up

\$1,269,711

Monthly Recurring Revenue Up

\$66,857

MRR Clients Increase

32%

When Nothing Else Works, Try Marketing

Better Your Best Essay

History

I went back and read my Rapid Implementation Workshop 90-day essay so I could remember where we were as a company; it was the start of an incredible journey. Before TMT I had a lot of ideas about how to acquire new customers. None of them worked. I thought I was smart enough to do marketing on my own, it was just a matter of time before I figured out, I didn't know what the hell I was doing.

I couldn't break \$1 million in revenue, got close but couldn't do it without marketing. I remember running into a quote on LinkedIn from a marketing professional that said:

"You can always tell when a small company will stay small. They obsess about the product/service and neglect the business, sales and marketing aspects of running a company. If you don't do it all, you'll stay small!"

The quote haunted me, kept me up at night, because I knew it was true. I was trying to polish all the shiny technical aspects of the company, but just doing an occasional poke at marketing.

In April of 2018 I bought the toolkit at an ASCII event and I was on my way to success. Not really, I let that thing collect dust and said I would get to it tomorrow. In August that year I went to a Cybersecurity Roadshow and finally made the commitment to join Accelerators Club.

I went to Rapid Implementation in December of 2018 and the next 90 days changed everything.

2019 Year of Acceleration

30 days into Accelerators Club and I realized I could not do this alone, so I hired a Marketing Manager ("Bella") and it was the best decision I ever made. We hit the ground running armed with the tools we received from the 90-day challenge and had great results. By the end of 2019 we grew our MRR from \$47,990 to \$85,164, a 77% increase.

We were invited to join Producers Club about halfway through the year, but Bella and I felt strongly that we needed to hit our 2019 goals before we felt qualified to move up.

In December 2019, we went to our first Producers Club and shortly after joined the All-In PC Group.

2020 Year of Multiplication

We entered 2020 with a bang, thanks to what we learned from TMT we used our print newsletters, testimonials, and shock-and-awe to close a deal with a lead that we had been

nurturing for 13 months. Our first contract of the year was \$36K in new MRR in January, this was a record sale for us.

While 2020 presented some challenges with a few months that seemed to go completely flat, we didn't stop marketing, we doubled-down as Marcus Lemonis said and we kept winning.

We grew from 7 employees to 15 and we expanded our marketing staff from 1 to 3 (which does not include me). We have two of our marketing staff in the TMT Marketing Managers group and we have a dedicated caller.

Total Revenue was up 114%



MRR increased by 79%



For Net Profit we went from none to some, so at least we are moving in the right direction. We prioritized growth over profit for 2020, with a lot more profit expected in 2021.

Our success in 2020 was made possible by our commitment to TMT marketing, we ran a large comprehensive list of campaigns, please reference the Marketing Campaigns And Strategies Implemented document included with our applications.

Lessons Learned

One of the mistakes that we made was not anticipating how long sales-cycles would become during the pandemic. That caused us to panic at first and threw off our rhythm of following up on sales leads, we lost some deals that we probably could have closed with more experience.

We worked on our Sales Process with the All-In Group and fixed some of our processes and closed tons of deals exceeding our Q4 goals for 2020.

Looking Back and Looking Forward

When I look back over 2020, it looks like a train wreck; definitely NOT what I thought it would be. However, 2020 showed me that following Robin's lead and pushing forward without fear can produce incredible results and I am personally grateful for the growth and prosperity that has been afforded to me and my employees. We were able to give some nice bonuses to all employees in December. Here are some of the responses we heard:

“Really?! I have never received a bonus before!”
“Wow, this is the biggest bonus I have ever received!”

Our team is incredibly passionate about what we do and about becoming the Top Choice and Safe Choice in our market. As I look forward to where we are going, I can see that we will cross the \$3M mark this year, \$10M in 5 years, and I have no idea what heights we'll achieve in 10 years. We are just entering our second market (Austin, TX) and I can see merging with other like-minded IT companies at some point.

I Am Your Spokesperson

Becoming the TMT Spokesperson of The Year would be a great honor, and really just confirm that an ordinary guy with a great team, and determination to follow a proven plan, can achieve incredible results. I don't like to complicate things. I like to find that thing that works (like a hand crank) and then...just spin the shit out of it.

My story is one of being just wise enough to know what I don't know and to go out and find a great solution in TMT and combine that with a great team of marketers (Bella, Erin, and Trisha) to create a winning formula. Our marketing team has a vision and it is this:

To Reach and Influence Our Market Using All Media All the Time

Sub-vision: To Be the Most Successful and Rewarded Marketing Team in Robin Robins Producer's Club. We can achieve this vision by being well equipped, focused, and working great together.

To Reach means to really define our target market and be dogmatic about reaching them using every type of media.

To Influence means we are providing valuable content that helps the prospect feel in control while trusting us to be their guide.

All Media to use all the media that makes sense (for example, we may not do TV ads, but we will explore all options that Robin recommends). This means adding more Social Media, Video, and SEO resources.

All the Time - that is our Tick-Tock strategy, we define and develop the content, then we release it to all media channels on a predictable schedule, like clockwork.

Our Marketing Values

We value teamwork, where none of us are afraid to roll up our sleeves and do any task. That team spirit means we work well together to achieve a common goal, putting team above ourselves.

We value excellence in our content and communication, and we put everything through the filter of what a new prospect or customer will experience.

We do not play small or hold ourselves back from achieving what we can with our talents and abilities. We are humble, but confident and not afraid to shine at any time.



2021

"Better Your Best"

Contest Essay



Leah Freiman

ItCon

Revenues Up

\$1,573,896

Monthly Recurring Revenue Up

\$82,719

Profits Up

\$1,042,305

Essay

Let me take you on the journey of how my company was founded, and how we got this far with no investors, brick by brick, client by client (mistake by mistake) until we are here, today, with a 300% growth in the craziest year ever, 2020.

In 2008, my husband Moshe and I founded ItCon. He was technical, I was a salesperson and business savvy, and we thought – what could go wrong? Well, by the time 2012 came around, we were ready to close shop. I was giving piano lessons and doing substitute teaching to cover our monthly bills, and we weren't taking any money out of the business. We had no business plan, no marketing plan, and most of all, we were completely burned out. Then one day Moshe saw a video of the famous red head and she was talking about marketing. He figured what the heck do we have to lose. We will try the toolkit and see if it's something worthwhile. If not, we close the business. We spoke to the salesperson, who mentioned that they will be doing a Rapid Implementation – the very first one. We borrowed \$10,000 to take the trip down to Tennessee and for the first time in years, things began to make sense. The marketing roadmap made sense and was doable with a lot of hard work. We felt so relieved that we were amongst other peers that also had the same pains we had and got back the energy to start working on the business. We did the 90-day contest and of course we won! We were hooked to everything TMT. It was like a magic lifeboat had arrived, taking us out of despair and giving us the opportunity to grow.

In the beginning of 2019, I started positioning myself as a “security expert” calling myself “queen of cyber security” on LinkedIn (no royal blood but who’s looking?) I did a Cybersecurity 1 day event called ITCON2019. It was an event made for business owners who were scared about cyber security. They are hearing about all the hacks and the craziness going on in the world – what were they supposed to do about it? How did they fit into the picture? They didn’t understand the language, their IT guy took care of it all for them. Can they trust their IT guy? So many of them were already hacked and the IT guy had a lot of excuses, but they were the ones that lost all that money. And the questions went on and on. We had a great turnout of 250 people, with lots of speakers. The event was about teaching business owners what cybercrime was all about and what they needed to do to get their business to a better, more secure place. As a first even, I expected it to cost me a pretty penny, but thankfully it was all covered by sponsors and was smashing success. I signed up 1 client for \$15k MRR plus approximately \$150k up to par project. The numbers were looking good.

Fast forward to the end of 2019 and I was at a crossroads. On the one hand, my business was making nice money, covering the bills, and I was doing better than ever. On the other hand, I was always waiting for “the other shoe to drop?”. I knew in my heart that my marketing needed a revamp, I wasn’t selling as much as I had the potential to, and overall monitoring and maintenance wasn’t what I would expect my MSP to give me. Aside for that, the market was quickly shifting towards security, and I would be up nights, worrying that my clients will get hacked. You see, I am not a technical person at all. I only know how to sell. I have an amazing power of explanation, and of understanding other people’s pain and

needs. Taking their needs and filling it with an available solution. My weakness is that I can't do anything myself. I'm always relying on someone in the company to fill that gap.

I decided to do a very risky, yet necessary move. I did a deep dive into my company and stop all sales in 2020. I wasn't going to focus on new clients. I took the year off to solidify my foundation. I started the year by redoing Rapid Implementation. A lot of the stuff in there was second nature to me already, but a lot of was never done. When you're given so much new information, as I got at the 1st Rapid implementation, some things are naturally going to fall between the cracks. I picked up on some new techniques and ideas and revamped the look and feel of my company, narrowed my target market, redesigned all my marketing material and gave the company a whole new look. We also joined the MAP 2.0 beta group and redid our entire Infusionsoft. I shifted the company from an MSP to an MSSP very fast. As we were expected to now be the security expert because it was "computers" and we were doing "IT" so "how could we not know??" I settled on a path of selling licenses at a profit. We don't charge for any security service, it's all in the licensing. This way, we can give the same service and still turn a profit becoming an MSSP. It was a very profitable move and only the beginning. The tricky part of cyber security is that each company needs a custom solution. When you have a stack with licensing, you can recommend to them what to choose, and they don't feel like you raised your prices. They understand they have to pay for any other licenses, and they are willing to pay for these too. Along with those came a full plate of up to par projects, to get the companies secured.

After a while of selling licensing, some of my clients started asking for more security. They wanted 24/7 monitoring, enhanced technology, and proactive security measures. This led to the launching of a new company: Aegis Trusted Defense. Aegis is a full functioning Security Operations Center (SOC) that provides security to companies looking for more than just covering the basics. In addition to offering these services to my current clients, I am planning on selling the SOC, on its own, to large healthcare centers and hospitals that already have either in-house or outsourced IT.

My next step was to learn how to hire. I took a business coach to teach me the tricks of the trade. One of my biggest inspirations was Dr. Nido Quebein. Coming from nothing and building himself from the bottom up. Learning how to handle disappointment, pain, frustration, and moving on. I read 2 of his books and took a lot to heart, which changed me as a person. I learned that anything is possible if you just put your head to it. This was a blessing in disguise, as 2020 was going to be especially challenging for me as a person, but I'm jumping ahead of myself. I started doing personality testing on any new employees, making sure they have the right attitude. Something my coach told me was, "you hire for skills and fire for attitude". I saw that my employees weren't lasting too long and I didn't know why. With the personality testing I learned more about them. I also did a full course of Steven Covey's "7 habits of highly influential people" and gave a 2-day course to my employees. It was very eye opening and I highly recommend it for every person.

Soon after getting the right employees to roll in, with a much better attitude in the company than I've ever had, the first of the 2 big "C" words hit our lives. The first was COVID-19. The world was going crazy, and we had to continue life. It was like a rip tide overcame me. We were home, with 6 children, and expected to continue the business as usual. Not only continue life, but as our clients are mainly in the medical field. That meant so much extra work as anyone servicing the medical field knows. The craziness of remote setup coupled with all the HIPAA compliance needs was off the charts! And everyone wanted everything done now! To add to that, I wasn't going to stop servicing those clients that were not in the medical field and suddenly couldn't pay their bills. When you form a partnership and a relationship with a company, you weather the storm with them. Thank G-d my month was covered easily by the medical clients and that gave me the leeway to continue servicing those other clients for free. I also made a new rule in my company – no getting sick! We are essential workers and we cannot afford to get Covid-19. Somehow they all listened to me and no one did get Covid-19.

I am extremely grateful that none of my 2020 goals involved sales, as our youngest daughter, who is now 6.5 year old and has a twin brother, has been diagnosed with Autism when she was just a baby. She is extremely bright and a special light in our lives, but as anyone with a special needs child can tell you, taking care of her needs is a full time job. She cannot do Zoom school, as she can't focus on zoom for more than 3-5 seconds. Entertaining her is a full time job. Entertaining the rest of the children was my second full time job. Running my company was my 3rd full time job. And now the next big "C" word hit me like a ton of bricks. If you can guess, the big "C" word is cancer. G-d's sense of humor was

full blown at that point. There wasn't even a sense of despair, because that would be a luxury I couldn't afford. I decided then and there that I would handle the entire cancer fiasco with humor and get out of it in 1 piece. There was no other option. I had the family and the business that was fully reliant on me, and that I invested too much in, I wasn't going to let some malignant cells decide my fate! As this particular cancer was extremely aggressive, I had to have surgery within 4 weeks. Having surgery during Covid-19 is no picnic. You are all alone in the hospital, and the worst part was the bi-weekly covid tests! Thankfully I did make it out in 1 piece (minus an organ so maybe 2 pieces) and was on the road to recovery! Every Tuesday I meet with one of my clients, and a week after my surgery I confirmed the meeting. The client was upset that I wanted to work, but I was so grateful to have another chance at life. To wake up in the morning and know that the universe needs me. That I am a contributing part of society – otherwise G-d wouldn't keep me alive! My entire perspective on life changed from that day on. Granted, I slowed down as I was physically unable to be as fast paced as I usually am, but my appreciation for life knows no bounds. Looking back at the hardships of building my business, of all the times I failed I see that it only strengthened me to what would be the biggest test of my life.

The reason I am entering the better your best contest this year is because I want to share my story that no matter what is thrown at you, it's only a stepping stone to bigger and better. Never use a personal circumstance as an excuse not to do things. Life will always throw situations that look unbearable. The question is what we do with it? Do we cease the opportunity and use it to our advantage or do we fall to despair and say I Can't. if it's possible for me to grow 300% in a year

of Covid, 6 children including a special needs child home for months on end, no sales, and cancer, it's possible for everyone.

Leah Freiman
CEO, ItCon