

BEYOND THE VIRUS

Future Growth Opportunities for B2B Organizations.

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Looking to the Horizon

When a crisis strikes, it is natural to focus on “the now,” the immediate tasks at hand, and the six inches in front of us. It is a normal reflex, because as business leaders, we have become increasingly tactical problem solvers. We narrow our field of vision to address only the immediate and most pressing problems.

Instead of also considering the longer strategic view and how we intend to steer our organizations to prosperity in the years ahead, we shorten our focus to one or two days ahead. We do what we must, as quickly and effectively as possible, while safeguarding our businesses, our people, our clients, and our resources.

Necessary? Absolutely. But only part of what should be a “survive to thrive” strategy.



Opportunity Beyond the Now

I remembered a great quote by the late Andy Grove,
the highly celebrated former CEO of Intel:

***“Bad companies are destroyed by crisis.
Good companies survive them.
Great companies are improved by them.”***

Earlier this week, I thought to take a moment and look beyond
“the now” to consider what might come when today’s uncertainty
and turbulence subside. I looked out to a potential future beyond
the pandemic and envisioned many tremendous opportunities for
b2b organizations. Some of this is based on current news flow.
Some on past experiences. Some is just what my “gut” tells me.



Speaking of Me...

I am Ed Delia, the second-generation leader of Delia Associates, a business branding and marketing firm founded in 1964 by my father, Michael A. Delia (who passed in 2012).

Across that more than fifty-five-year span, our company has helped hundreds of b2b brands successfully navigate a variety of turbulent times, including six recessions, numerous weather events, the 9/11 attacks, and this latest pandemic.

And looking across my 25+ years in the business, I can honestly say:

*Challenges are the breeding ground
of opportunity for b2b brands.*



Discovering Opportunity

Whether your organization is a manufacturer or a service provider, and regardless of whether or not your goods and services directly or indirectly support the current pandemic, I hope these insights inspire your own thought processes about emerging opportunities and how you can bring your company to higher ground; maybe even higher than you would have ever anticipated.

As you take in these ideas, my hope is that you will see opportunities abound, regardless of what your offering may be: b2b equipment, products, manufacturing, technology, or services.



How 2020 Started Out: All About Sustainability

I know it seems like a long time ago right now but take a moment to go back to the start of the year.

As we began 2020, the “Sustainability Movement” seemed to reach a fever pitch. What started as a whisper some twenty years ago, has become a corporate and civic mandate. This did not happen overnight, nor was it driven by a single, sudden dramatic event. Rather, what quietly began as conversations, grew into a groundswell of action, then requirements, and finally into corporate and civic values.

It permeated the mindset of consumers and businesses, as well as every aspect of the supply chain of goods and services.



Incidents of Lasting Impact

Consider another not-too-distant incident: The 9/11 attacks, which to this day, also have had similar lasting impact.

Who would ever think that taking off your belt and shoes to go through airport security would be a requirement?

Now it is an act people perform for every flight and without question. And we would gladly do more. All in the name of national security, which in its own way, has become a mandate, one as serious, if not more so, than Sustainability.



Sustainability + 9/11?

In both “movements,” one designed to protect our environment, and the other to protect our nation and its people, the ripple effect was huge and sustaining.

Many companies, product and services were formed on the backs of both, and many were reshaped, as were their goods and services.

So, what does this have to do with the coronavirus pandemic?

Much like the 9/11 attacks made an entire generation of Americans realize that we are not immune to terrorism, COVID-19 has shown us with alarming speed that we also are not 100% safe from viruses and disease. The veil of naivete has not only been lifted but torn off and in brutal fashion.

Before I discuss the emerging opportunities that both b2b manufacturers and service brands should be thinking about now, I'd first like to talk about a general prediction that will become equally, if not more far reaching, than that of Sustainability or Travel Security...



The “Purity Movement”

Wellness, hygiene, and cleanliness become a business and societal mandate.

As we emerge from the crushing grip of the virus, albeit somewhat slowly and methodically, many forward leaning opportunities for b2b organizations will emerge as part of what I envision as the next Corporate Mandate: “The Purity Movement.”

Much like the Sustainability Movement, which started quietly but passionately, we can already find the “whisper” of the Purity Movement in various progressive organizations and in more progressive economies. Here are some potential ideas and opportunities that I see coming as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which will have an impact on business environments and policies, the manner in which we provide services, and how consumer products are used, manufactured, and distributed.

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- 1. Business Environments & Policies**
 - 2. Conducting Business**
 - 3. Consumer Products**
 - 4. Manufacturing**

1.

Business Environments & Policies

- Corporate Health Kick
- Remote Work “Works”
- IT Security Explosion
- Healthy Scanning Tech
- Ultra Clean Standards
- Disaster Readiness Plus

Business Environments & Policies

CORPORATE HEALTH KICK

Corporate “Wellness” Programs will become essential, as a healthier workforce/team will be recognized as having a direct and measurable impact on overall corporate performance, profitability, and output. I can envision tools and apps used to measure and gauge the correlation of employee healthiness to both the top and bottom lines.



Business Environments & Policies

REMOTE WORK “WORKS” ... WITH THE RIGHT POLICIES & TOOLS

HR professionals will help make remote work better. The work-from-home option has existed in my industry for quite a while. The more progressive firms gravitated to it quickly. Many reverted back to a “you have to be here” policy over time, due to a noticeable drop off in productivity and work quality; the result of less continuity of interaction when you cannot just walk across the office to review, collaborate, or meet in person a team.

But, faced with the pandemic and mandatory social distancing orders, there are means to make the work-from-home option successful for the company and its clients, and HR professionals (together with technical guidance) are key to making it work smoothly and fairly for all. Attorneys and technical consultants will also be playing important roles in supporting longer-term remote policies, procedures, and methodologies.



Business Environments & Policies

IT SECURITY EXPLOSION

It's virtually a given that IT security and securing remote networks will be over stressed for the foreseeable future. Why? Because many of us were equipped to work remotely "sometimes," but not all of us all the time. IT companies are already busy and can expect to stay busy for the foreseeable future, helping executives and professionals adapt to remote engagement with networks, and making sure they are fully operational 24/7/365, and secure. Without appropriate security measures in place, it's a hacker's paradise.



Business Environments & Policies

“CLEAN” & HEALTHY SCANNING TECH

Soon we may start seeing technology and procedures in place to scan and determine if an employee is sick or contagious, prior to entering the work environment. Battling through illness and “soldiering on” through that cough or cold will no longer be viewed as a symbol of toughness, but rather a potential source of contagion and irresponsibility.

Implementing these types of protocols will also represent a delicate balance between the organization’s collective well-being and the individual employee’s medical privacy. However, I envision some of the layers of medical privacy coming down, if in doing so means saving or protecting lives.



Business Environments & Policies

ULTRA-CLEAN STANDARDS & HYGIENE

Facilities, offices and wherever people congregate will adhere to much more rigorous sanitary standards. HR professionals will be front and center, creating new policies and procedures that redefine what a “safe work environment” means and looks like.

Policies that used to be exclusively for food handlers will be established and mandated for all organizations, and virtually all events, conferences, or gatherings, regardless of size.

For cleaning and janitorial services businesses, this is an opportunity to “sparkle and shine,” so to speak. I envision various grades of professionals and elevated standards of environment cleaning and sterility being put into place. Much like a car wash establishment: “Do you want, Standard, Gold or Platinum?” with the “Platinum” level of clean being the new “Standard.”



Business Environments & Policies

DISASTER READINESS PLUS

If a global pandemic gripped us once, chances are it can happen again. But next time, organizations of all sizes will be ready with a detailed playbook and proactive disaster readiness plans. Training, emergency drills, and testing and instruction on work-from-home scenarios will become routine, and part of other established mandatory corporate training and testing requirements.



1.

Business Environments & Policies

OPPORTUNITIES FOR:

- Corporate wellness coaches, consultants and curriculums to support formalized employee wellness initiatives
- HR, Legal and tech professionals to establish guidelines, policies and logistics of lasting WFH infrastructures.
- IT professionals and security software companies to assure that remote connectivity is secure.
- Scanning technologies and security companies to implement workplace temperature scanning devices.
- Cleaning professionals to implement higher levels of service offerings, standards and protocols.
- HR consultants to provide readiness plans, procedures and training should another similar incident happen again.

2.

Conducting Business

- Virtual Tradeshows. VR. Gamification.
- What's an Office?
- The Remote Digital Sales Professional
- Travel: Security + Health Screening
- B2B Shifts to B2C

Conducting Business

VIRTUAL TRADESHOWS, VR AND GAMIFICATION

The virtual tradeshow comes back to the foreground and gets a much-needed facelift and technology boost.

Video gaming is already equipped with what may very well become a component of the b2b landscape of business communications and interactions. The current pandemic has the potential to accelerate development of such game-based environments and experiences.

Gaming platform concepts for the corporate world – perhaps “shelved” for being too progressive – will be dusted off, tuned up, and rapidly implemented. A multibillion-dollar industry for sure.

For those of you with grade school-to-high schoolers at home, think a corporate version of Fortnite, where the Avatars engage in commerce instead of combat.



Conducting Business

WHAT'S AN OFFICE?

In-the-office proximity may become something viewed and applied as more of a luxury or occasional necessity, versus the day-to-day norm. We can expect a proliferation of new remote-based companies where advances in spatial tech make remote working work better. The tech will come around to support this; it already is.

Online sharable collaboration tools and apps will increase in popularity with a whole new generation of GoTo Meeting, Zoom and Join Me. These popular tools, with an explosion in usage, are already showing their warts. A legion of new video conferencing platforms options, interactions and features will emerge, and quickly, with improved interfaces to make geographic distance of little consequence.



Conducting Business

THE REMOTE DIGITAL SALES PROFESSIONAL

Face-to-Face meetings will lose a little bit of their luster. This will be a hard transition for “old guard” selling or service professionals who are accustomed to going out, jumping the fence each morning, and meeting one-on-one with customers and prospects.

Many prospects will opt out of these types of live exchanges, preferring to use video conference calls with shorter, briefer, and to-the-point interactions. The new sales professional will need to be adept and flexible, both online and offline. That means learning how to act and react in front of the camera via webinars, truly embracing social selling tools and strategies, and being familiar with an array of video conferencing platforms, devices and interactions.

Videos-on-the-fly and new digital presentation-ware will be just some of the tools in the new sales professional’s arsenal.



Conducting Business

TRAVEL: SECURITY + HEALTH SCREENING

Did you think the security line at the airport was long before this pandemic? You will look back with fondness to the days where it only took an hour to get through security.

In the short term, airports – if they want passengers to fly with them again – will be instituting new procedures to prevent sick or infected passengers from flying.

Millions of travelers already have phobias about the spread of germs on airplanes. Get ready for a whole new level of screening and scrutiny around travel wellness.



Conducting Business

B2B BUSINESS MODELS SHIFT TO DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER

Should a segment of professionals elect to prolong their work-from-home status or make it more of the norm, many business functions, products and services designed for large corporate or single-campus populations will have to rethink their models for servicing a now spread out geographic population. Or new models will emerge. So that delivery of office supplies to one location will now be fractured across maybe 10 or 20 or more locations, or services designed for a group population need to become fragmented.

While the adoption of e-commerce has been building for some time among b2b organizations, the recent pandemic will accelerate adoption for both product and services. Consulting companies are already moving quickly to spin up knowledge tools that can be purchased, watched, and downloaded remotely. These have existed for some time of course, but the latest episode will intensify the pace; it's already begun.



2.

Conducting Business

OPPORTUNITIES FOR:

- Gaming companies and virtual environment platforms to embrace the tradeshow concept and bring it to virtual life.
- Creators of the next generation of video conferencing tools, add-ons and interface technologies.
- Sales trainers and sales tools producers to rewrite the book on face-to-face selling.
- Temperature screening, whether the software, hardware or implementation, to bring a new level of safety to all forms of mass travel and transportation.
- Ecommerce platforms and implementers to help b2b organizations reach a now disparate audience with equal effectiveness than large groups or gatherings.

3.

Consumer Products

- Antimicrobial Everything
- Badges of Clean
- Healthy Chic and Wearables
- Distribution: the last “clean” mile
- At-Home Medical Testing
- Tele-health + Remote Exams

Consumer Products

ANTIMICROBIAL EVERYTHING!

Antimicrobial will be the new organic. Everything from raw materials to apparel to special surface treatments (think about the proliferation of touchscreens at point of sale and display) will soothe the nerves of shaken, increasingly cautious consumers.



Consumer Products

BADGES OF “CLEAN”

Somewhere, right now, experts are envisioning a Regulated “Standard” Icon of Cleanliness. Think the immediately recognizable recycling logo. “Being Clean” will have its own standards and iconography to rival “Being Green.” And the ultimate in will be the potential mash-up of products touting an integration of both properties.



Consumer Products

HEALTHY CHIC ACCESSORIES AND WEARABLES

Masks will be not only functional but also fashionable (provided it is definitively proven that they help broadly mitigate the receiving and transmitting of this and other diseases).

New variants of germ-killing gloves that integrate fashion and germ-protecting function will also become commonplace, if not stylish. We will likely see fabrics infused with disease-fighting agents and/or properties.

New sprays and topicals will follow suit. And a whole spectrum of trendy facial masks, bluffs and scarves have already hit the ecommerce scene.



Consumer Products

DISTRIBUTION: THE LAST MILE MUST BE A CLEAN MILE

Distribution will have new standards and methods of ensuring cleanliness. Are goods clean? Are they secure? Are they safe? These will be the questions on the minds of many, especially in the proverbial “last mile” of distribution for consumer goods as they arrive at their final destination, typically a consumer’s residence.



Consumer Products

AT-HOME MEDICAL TESTING FOR A VARIETY OF ISSUES

Consumers will be able to self-test for medical issues, coupled with online or tele-health models, to support in diagnosis and treatment, with going to the doctor or hospital being a method of later, or last resort.

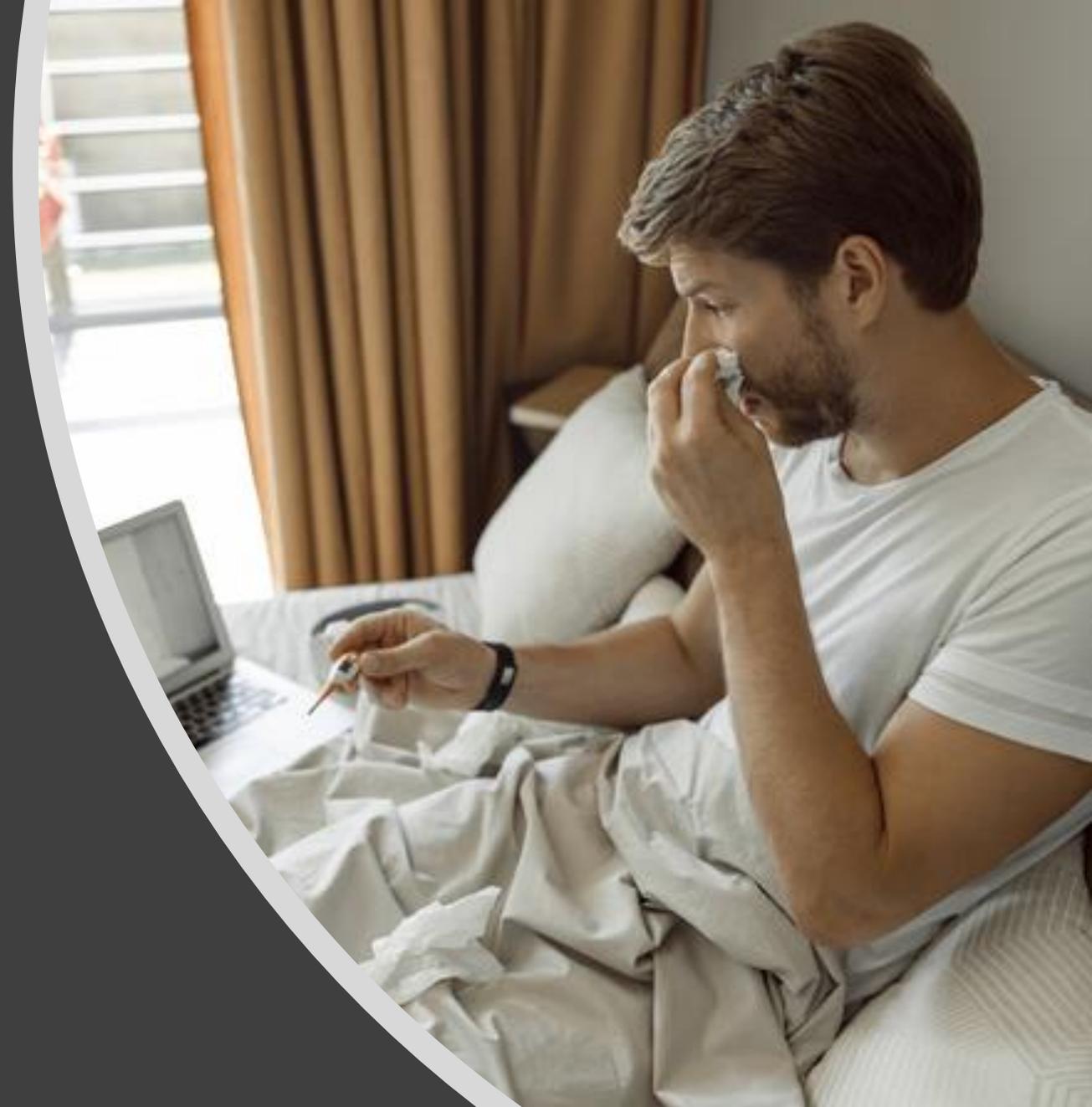


Consumer Products

TELE-HEALTH AND REMOTE EXAMINATION.

The typical physical will be done totally remotely and with more frequency, with apps, wearables and tools available to patients to remotely check for blood pressure, EKG, height, weight, breathing and the like – welcome to the age of The Virtual House Call.

With face-to-face doctor visits already a challenge before the pandemic, this will be a potentially explosive growth area, as geographic boundaries no longer exist, and healthcare professionals can serve populations wherever they may reside, and wherever there is a need.



3.

Consumer Products

OPPORTUNITIES FOR:

- A range of new products with antimicrobial properties, additives and agents.
- A variety of organizations to establish new standards, guidelines and credentials relative to being “certified clean.”
- Accessories, devices and apparel developers to align with digital controls for temperature, cleanliness and facial and hand protection.
- Distribution companies to demonstrate “clean” deliveries, whether to a commercial space or home.
- Life sciences companies to bring to market a wider range of at-home testing solutions.
- Medical practitioners to expand reach, geography, and efficiency through broader implementation of telehealth offerings and remote examinations.

4.

Manufacturing

- Diversify. Diversify. Diversify.
- Supply Chain Transparency
- Smart + Fully Automated
- Agile Supply Chains
- Space. Design. Location.

Manufacturing

SUPPLY CHAIN. DIVERSIFY. DIVERSIFY. DIVERSIFY.

The once blind trust we placed in China to make the world's well...everything, is likely to make a dramatic shift. Supply chains will be inclined to diversify wherever they can. One possible scenario is regional micro-diversification, where supply chains build small manufacturing "microcosms" as opposed to huge, centralized facilities. They will be spread across different regions, creating a spiderweb. Smaller manufacturers will gain. Larger ones will need to unbundle their infrastructures.

This will create a natural continuum of supply in the wake of disease crises, and natural disasters. If one production "pod" goes down – even temporarily – others can still function. This shift will ensure a proliferation of many more small businesses that are agile, responsive, and able to handle the ebbs and flows of demand more readily than larger, monolithic organizations.



Manufacturing

SUPPLY CHAIN TRANSPARENCY

There will be greater transparency of the supply chain – all the way up to the consumer level. Where did it come from? Forget about organic for a moment – more importantly, is it clean? Consumers will not only want to know what’s in it, but how “clean” it is, regardless of the service, product or its ingredients.

There will be a greater peeling back of the onion, so to speak, with a deeper level of consumer introspection into brands and not only the consumer facing brand, but all of the “brands-behind-the-brands” that went into producing the finished good. Expect to see b2b suppliers at all tiers – before largely invisible to end users - brush up their corporate brand image in the wake of increasing end user scrutiny.



Manufacturing

THE SMART & FULLY AUTOMATED FACTORY REALIZED

Robotics, automation, and business intelligence at the factory level will enable social distancing to become a norm. While many company manufacturing hubs previously flocked to China, we will see a continued move to locales more conducive to American needs.

More manufacturing will certainly return to the U.S., and technology will enable American industry to work smarter and with greater precision and cost-effectiveness. Robotics, automation, 3-D printing, and smart factories will lead the way in these efforts.



Manufacturing

AGILE SUPPLY CHAIN PROVIDERS

Tools and providers will just focus on organizing and shaping remote, agile supply chains in the best possible way. In the name of diversification, supply chains will be comprised and assembled from a series of micro-manufacturers – small teams that can adapt quickly, with systems designed for rapid changeover and modification. They can literally “bounce” from product type to product type with extreme dexterity, thanks to a team that is continuously trained in the latest technology, systems, and processes.

Supply chains will no longer be “set in stone” or stationary. The future will be one of incredible agility where supply chains are constructed and deconstructed rapidly to meet ebbs and flows of demand, and the proliferation of new timely and relevant products.



Manufacturing

SPACE DESIGN AND LOCATION

In the wake of coronavirus, spaces will need to be reimagined, redesigned and repurposed. The new norm will be spreading people out on the floor, spreading out locations, moving to parts of the country where they normally would not erect plants or facilities. With the shift from “pack ‘em in” moving to “spread ‘em out,” the architectural and building community can expect to write, learn and adapt to a whole new playbook for designing commercial and industrial spaces.

From retail to corporate, to venues and eateries, how many tables can we pack in? How many seats can we fill? How much can we stock and still permit movement? Think again. Social distancing will become an informally practiced practice. Plus, there is a lot of open land out there in the vast US countryside. While viruses like COVID-19 have proven to know no boundaries, many of the more rural communities have been largely spared while the densely populated cities are hit hardest, simply because more people in closer proximity means higher likelihood of spreading germs. Expect to see some population shift away from cities to more rural outlying areas, particularly if remote working works and there is no problem videoing in.



4.

Manufacturing

OPPORTUNITIES FOR:

- Small and mid-sized specialty manufacturers to win new customers and market share as supply chains look to diversify.
- Companies at all points of the supply chain to create more visible and consumer-relevant forward-facing brand identities.
- A variety of technologies, robotics and automation platforms to enable smaller US-factories to do more in less time, at higher levels of quality, and competitive price points.
- Training of manufacturing teams to move out of their comfort zones to embrace speed and dexterity in the new agile manufacturing environment of faster, smaller, shorter runs.
- Architects, builders and designers to rethink space, spread it out, while crafting environments of equal or better functionality than the previous mantra of tighter spaces.

Summing it Up.

Whether your organization is a b2b provider of goods or services, I hope this presentation has helped inspire new ideas, directions, and opportunities that you can rapidly implement in your organization.

If I were to sum up what the American “business” brand stands for first and foremost, it’s not innovation, or opportunity, or freedom, but rather the theme of “motion.” As a nation, we are in continuous movement, always stretching and reaching farther, always looking for new frontiers and new bars to rise to, only to rise yet again.

I invite you to put your organization in motion then, as you embrace these ideas, make them your own, and implement them to engage new growth opportunities for your company. Change can be hard, yet the winds of change have hit us right in the face this time.

Be nimble, embrace the change and opportunities that come with it, and be prosperous. Wishing you now and always, massive success and prosperity.

Let's Talk about Your Next Horizon

Want to learn more about what Delia Associates is doing for b2b clients during this unexpected health crisis? Interested in the trends, predictions, and ideas we're currently tracking? We would love to hear what's on your mind. You never know where a conversation will take you. Together we have the power to make connections, problem-solve, create, and innovate. We're always ready to listen. Just give us a call.



THANK YOU!



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