



Small Business Recovery Toolkit

- 1. Cultivate a focused, optimistic mindset.** With all the spinning plates you must deal with right now, it's easy to get overwhelmed. Take it one day at a time. Do everything you can to foster an optimistic mindset: Your mood impacts employees, and they need to see that you're calm and focused.

It's crucial to keep your mind clear so you can constantly reinvent your business. Make it a daily priority to [manage your stress](#). Meet regularly with other business owners. They can help you solve problems you're struggling with, but just as important, reaching out to them will help you feel less alone.

- 2. Do all you can to generate cash flow.** Tap into your lines of credit. Apply for everything you think you may be eligible for; even if you're not sure you'll need it, it's better to be safe than sorry. The Spring Entrepreneur Hub (click [here](#) and [here](#)) is a great resource for helping business owners figure out how to access COVID-19 relief programs. They have hosted several webinars that are very useful.



Be transparent about financials with employees. Seeing the financial big picture has a way of getting them focused and creating a sense of ownership. They may be able to help you find ways to save money, which can help with cash flow issues.

- 3. Tap into new revenue streams.** For example, revamp products and services for the "new normal." At the Bodacious Cafe in Pensacola, we've always focused on healthful items, but expanded our menu to include comfort foods (which people really crave now). This increased business significantly. At the Blue Wahoos stadium, we have always been famous for great food. Even though we aren't playing any baseball, we offered a special "Opening Day" meal. We did this to honor baseball fans since we know this day is special to them, and it was very well received. We've done all kinds of creative things in our coffee drive-thru to stimulate business (books and bobbleheads to all customers).

A few other creative business ideas:

- Sell gift cards and gift certificates for when you do open back up. Civic organizations may be able to help. For instance, Hot Springs, Arkansas, has started a [#SupportSpaCity](#) initiative. When you buy a gift card to a local business, the Hot Springs Area Community Foundation provides grocery assistance in the same amount to needy citizens.

- Find new ways to distribute your products. Pensacola has created a drive-thru farmers' market.
- Provide service now for payment on back end. Be careful about price reductions. It can be hard to recover this lost revenue once times get better. For example, if someone can't pay rent, you may not be able to forgive it, but you can extend the lease.

See article below about how a Pensacola business owner got creative with his craft beer business and managed to stay afloat!

- 4. Promote local pride.** Make "buying local" cool and a must-have. You have to narrate this message and make sure people understand that this creates local jobs. One good way to promote local pride is by partnering with other small businesses. Hand out their coupons when folks make a purchase at your business (and vice versa). A local wine shop or craft beer store might partner with a local restaurant for a stay-at-home date night package.
- 5. If you don't have an online presence, get one now.** It's time. People will be shopping online far more in the foreseeable future (if not forever). But don't just sit a bricks-and-mortar store on top of an online platform. Carefully think it through and be sure it makes sense for where your customers are. Fit what you sell into their life.
- 6. Use social media to generate interest in your business.** Get creative. Give them something to talk about. This is where social-media-savvy younger employees might be able to really help. They can share their creative ideas and also post/share on their own accounts (employee advocacy builds authenticity and trust). There are good examples in the craft beer story below.
- 7. Stay connected to customers.** This is a good time to show your appreciation. You may have the time right now. For example, Blue Wahoos employees wrote personal thank-you notes to season ticket holders. If your restaurant or store delivers, consider doing it yourself rather than hiring a delivery service. It's a great time to get face-to-face with customers (with masks and social distancing of course!).
- 8. Ask employees for their ideas.** Most likely they're a storehouse of untapped creativity. Frontline workers sometimes see opportunities owners miss.
- 9. Adjust your thinking for future realities.** Yes, things will come back, but differently. How can you modify your products and services to account for new customer behaviors?

An events company in Pensacola realized that the Wahoos baseball field was not being used and is finding ways to utilize all the downtime. Anticipating that even after social distancing measures are lifted people may still want space, they're planning pop-up Sunday brunches so people can spread out.

10. Use the downtime to sharpen your saw. We can all stand to get better, and now we have time. This “pause” is a chance to work *on* your business, not just *in* your business. Audit your company from top to bottom. Consider training (and cross-training) your people, do some deep mentoring, take a hard look at job descriptions and SOPs, etc. See our “Leading in Uncertain Times” [tool kit](#) for more ideas. Studer Community Institute is offering a lot of great training at no charge at the moment. Click [here](#) to see the full schedule and register.



11. Help virtual workers stay productive and connected. Job One is managing your own [virtual expectations](#). Take a hard look at how you’re communicating. (Often, leaders aren’t as clear as they think they are.) Let your team know when they’ll hear from you so they’ll be ready with deliverables and any questions.

This is a real chance for people to take ownership of their work. Can the “to-do” list, but do communicate what’s important. Every day, ask them to report on one question: *What did you do to move the needle today?*

Zoom often so everyone stays connected and feels like a team. Seeing people’s faces matters.

Be mindful of how you communicate. Remember that you set the tone. Employees look to you for guidance, not just in how they perform but in how they feel. Be optimistic but also realistic and honest. Your employees can handle it.

12. Keep furloughed employees engaged in your mission. If you’re operating on a PPP loan but business has slowed to a crawl, find something for employees to do that serves the community while staying connected to your company and mission. Because baseball season has been canceled, Pensacola Blue Wahoos employees have been busy fixing Little League ball fields.

13. Raise your civic IQ and stay connected to your community. As a small business owner, you and others like you are the backbone of your community. It’s so important to join with other small business owners and, together, help lead the way to a more vibrant future. Click [here](#) to see a list of our CivicCon speakers. Pick a few to showcase and use this time to get your community speaking with one voice, as some of the best experts in the country teach the fundamentals of community-building.

Thriving on the Other Side: Check out this three-part series on strongtowns.org on how communities can thrive on the other side of the pandemic:

[Thriving on the Other Side: How Your Community Can Recreate Vibrancy After COVID-19](#)

[A Framework for Thriving: Keep These Four Areas Front and Center as You Move Forward](#)

[The Culture of Your Community May Determine Your Success on the Other Side](#)

What One Pensacola Business Owner Is Doing to Stay Afloat and Make a Difference in the Community

As the quarantine rolls on, people are looking for creative ways to keep their businesses alive. Local craft beer maker and owner of [Perfect Plain Brewery](#) D.C. Reeves has pivoted operations to not only keep his business afloat, but to help healthcare workers and continue meeting the needs of the community as well.



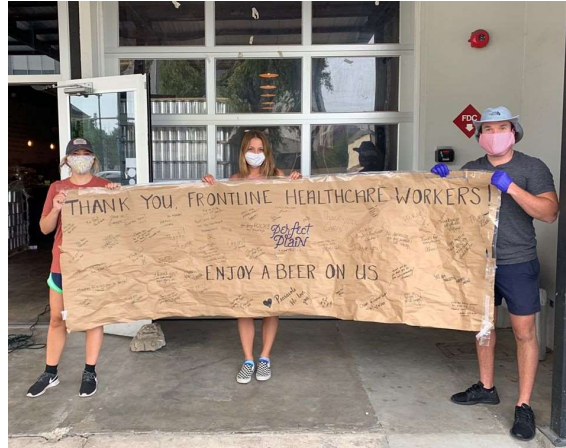
With some creativity, ingenuity, and a little help from PPP, they have been able to keep everyone employed and break even. D.C. Reeves credits their survival to asking themselves daily, *Where is the opportunity TODAY?* ...as you literally have to reinvent every single day. Reeves says they brainstorm as a group and they keep a close eye on their social media engagement levels, knowing they have to do things that people connect to, which is key.

Here's a snapshot of some of their best ideas:

Perfect Plain Brewery captured people's hearts and connected to their mission: "To create incredible experiences that make our beer, our brewery, and our hometown, Pensacola, unforgettable." To support out-of-work employees in the local craft beer community, Reeves began the Save Pensacola Beer initiative, selling [t-shirts](#) that sold out immediately and raised over \$6,000. Proceeds go to out-of-work craft brewery employees in the area, and not just Perfect Plain employees.



To thank Pensacola's healthcare heroes, Perfect Plain also started the Buy a Beer for a Healthcare Worker program. Participating customers donated and signed a giant "thank-you" poster, and then Perfect Plain delivered drink vouchers to healthcare workers at Baptist Hospital and presented them with the poster, which is hanging in their lobby.



They increased their social media engagement. While not the intention, both of these things turned out to be incredible social media opportunities. Check out their [Facebook](#) page and [Instagram](#).

They started a to-go and delivery service model. Prior to the pandemic, Perfect Plain relied on on-premise sales. They had a crowler machine that allowed customers to take home their favorite draft beer fresh from the tap, but they rarely used it. Once they could no longer serve customers in person, they immediately began processing bottles and cans for carry-out orders.

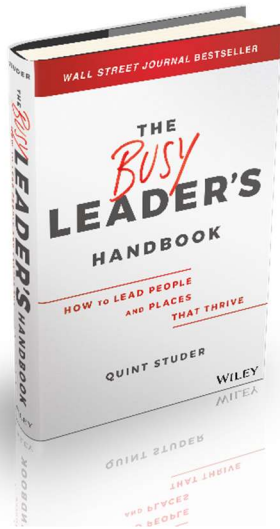


They found the void. They asked, *What are people missing right now?* This revealed the need for hard-to-replicate cocktails. And with that, Perfect Plain started offering the drinks that people might not easily be able to create at home. Customers can purchase make-it-yourself cocktail kits for margaritas, daiquiris, Bloody Marys, and more. (Don't worry, they've got a liquor license!) You provide the glass, and they provide a full bottle of spirits along with the signature mixers you need for a refreshing beverage. And for customers who wish to pick up their cocktails curbside, they offer tasty frozen drinks such as daiquiris, bushwackers, and hibiscus frosé—silly straws included!



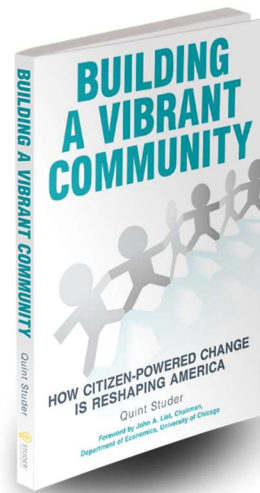
Finally, they started selling masks. Perfect Plain partnered with a local volunteer organization, Pensacola Mask Sewers, and became a distributor for them. In addition to filling a community need, this gave customers one more reason to visit.





***The Busy Leader's Handbook:
How to Lead People and Places
That Thrive***

(Wiley, 2019, ISBN: 978-1-119-57664-8, \$28.00) is available at bookstores nationwide, and at Amazon.com and other online booksellers.



***Building a Vibrant Community:
How Citizen-Powered Change Is
Reshaping America***

(Be the Bulb Publishing, 2018, ISBN: 978-0-998-13111-5, \$24.95) is available at bookstores nationwide, and at Amazon.com and other online booksellers.



Quint Studer is the author of *Wall Street Journal* bestseller *The Busy Leader's Handbook* and a lifelong businessman, entrepreneur, and student of leadership. He not only teaches it; he has done it. He has worked with individuals at all levels and across a variety of industries to help them become better leaders and create high-performing organizations. He seeks always to simplify high-impact leader behaviors and tactics for others.

Quint has a great love for teaching his insights in books and has authored nine of them in addition to *The Busy Leader's Handbook*. His book *Results That Last* also made the *Wall Street Journal* bestseller list. *Building a Vibrant Community*, published in 2018, is a blueprint for communities seeking to revitalize themselves.

Quint is the founder of Vibrant Community Partners and Pensacola's Studer Community Institute. He currently serves as Entrepreneur-in-Residence at the University of West Florida, Executive-in-Residence at George Washington University, and Lecturer at Cornell University.

To learn more, please visit thebusyleadershandbook.com, vibrantcommunityblueprint.com, and studer.org.

Vibrant Community Partners: Who We Are and What We Do

Vibrant Community Partners (VCP) is a coach advisory firm that helps communities on the path to vibrancy and creates a plan to help them grow into the best version of themselves. In general, we help communities recognize and achieve their potential. We work with community members and local anchor institutions to get everyone on the same page, raise civic IQs, bring citizens together, galvanize their small business community, and make smart decisions about growth and development.

Quint Studer created VCP after playing a pivotal role in Pensacola, Florida's revitalization. A decade and a half ago, it was struggling economically. Today, it's thriving. In the past five years, there's been a 67 percent increase in downtown construction and a 34 percent growth in property values. The Quality of Life Survey went from 27 percent in 2008 to 63 percent in 2019 of people believing the city is moving in the right direction. And it's winning awards and accolades for its flourishing downtown. Now Quint and his team use best practices harvested from Pensacola's journey and their research of other communities to create a blueprint to follow.

VCP has a gift for zeroing in on what makes your community special. Then, we provide the tools and tactics you need to amplify these attributes and tell your story to the world. In short, we help you shape that distinctive "sense of place" that attracts investors, entrepreneurs, new talent, and visitors and keeps your young people from moving away.

To learn more about Vibrant Community Partners, please visit www.vibrantcommunityblueprint.com.

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