



ARCH Support

Getting Over the Hump
Getting Through a Slump
Flattening the Curve

Wednesday's Tip Sheet: Steps pros took to get through a challenging time in life.

FEATURED PRO: *Jim Taugher, CEO + Creative Director – CI Design, Inc.*

TELL US ABOUT A DIFFICULT PROJECT OR TIME IN YOUR LIFE:

In the creative industry, we are at our best when we serve our clients in the role of “Disruptor.” This doesn’t mean non-stop big revolutionary ideas that change whole industries (although as an ENFP I spend a lot of time thinking in that corner of my mind). We bring disruption to brands and campaigns by helping clients see opportunities from different angles. We lead them through options and present the effect on their goals as satisfying, fun, proactive.

But what happens when the disruption is served to us, and we are forced to react?

React for our company. React on behalf of our clients. React in our personal lives.

*In my **personal life**, this has been a difficult time. My life looks a bit like a country song right now. I lost my mom and even my dog died during quarantine.*

Our company: We are in the midst of a pandemic the modern world has not seen. CI Design has 35 employees working remotely. For three years we have stress-tested this by instituting dozens of all office work-at-home days. Daily standup meetings and goals were maintained. Productivity reports were positive and showed that remote work was rewarding for all and not a stress on the system. It speaks a lot for our team and culture.

Even so, in early March we found ourselves quickly trying to put the carpet of “pro-action” under our feet and serve our clients. It feels entirely different, yet it feels familiar too. CI Design has lived and worked through the economic impact of 9/11 and the Great Recession of 2008.

In each, we felt the push and pull of the reaction and pro-action equation. It's very much like flight attendants explaining, "First take the oxygen mask yourself then proceed to help others."

HOW DID YOU GET THROUGH IT?

In 2008: CI Design team huddled to make quick decisions about expenses, costs, and sacrifices to: 1) Sense what the floor felt like 2) Establish a new bottom line and 3) Move forward in strength. Some accounts hit the brakes. Some clients remained committed to the momentum we had going (albeit with some scale adjustment). And some passive clients actually became more actively involved. For example, in the decade prior to 2008, education clients' revenue was about 20-25% of revenue. In three *months*, education clients led our revenue. Our clientele and prospects also diversified the industries they serve.

A proactive, design-thinking discipline means we can be inventive and creative for ourselves and our clients.

Today: The very first call we received early March was from an account putting their business on hold. Their product basically just lost its market...indefinitely. We responded with understanding, not judgement.

Our *reaction* became a favorite story of *pro-action* when one week later this manufacturing client used DISRUPTION to PIVOT. Their product, reconfigured, became an integral solution for temporary hospital rooms. We were able to pivot all content and PPC campaign activity to the new product offering. In one week, MILLIONS of dollars of new orders were placed. They quickly came up with a second product pivot offering that launched this week.

Proacting purely for our client's sake looked like this: CI Design created a sales tool product platform for remote sales that we prototyped and demoed for five clients. We also looked at extra capacities we had with two of our team members and offered reduced rate services to clients who had a need for those services. They were appreciative and we are launching one of those efforts in a couple of days.

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Proacting feels and works better than reacting. Embracing disruption is a lot easier when we can dictate the timeframe. It's a whole other thing when the disruption is thrust upon us. Can we take a deep breath after normal, expected immediate reactions and *proact inside the disruption*? By inviting disruption, we practice what we preach when disruption chooses us.

FAVORITE QUOTE: "*Being positive in a negative situation is not naive, it's leadership.*"

— Ralph Marston