



“Stronger together: Creating a community despite a time of crisis,” as originally aired on June 11, 2020

Chloe Blair: My name is Chloe, and I am a content creator at Sidecar. This session is titled, Creating Community In A Time Of Crisis. And all of you guys have created really great online communities. And I just wanted to start a discussion about kind of how you guys did that, and the importance around creating community and connection. And especially as it relates to this time right now. And then we'll move right into a discussion.

Janae Holmes: Sure I can start. My name is Janae Holmes. I'm co-owner and co-founder of Free To Be Power Yoga. We have three locations, one in uptown New Orleans, one in downtown New Orleans and one in Old Metairie, Louisiana. And Kelly and I have been in business together and partnership together for the last about seven years. We've been in that location for five years, and before that we were on Tchoupitoulas Street.

Chloe Blair: Awesome. And then Bradley, do you want to go next?

Bradley Schneller: Sure. I am Bradley Schneller. I am the owner of Roux Fitness. We have been around for seven years now. We are located in Jefferson, Louisiana. And we are just using this as an opportunity to not only be located in Jefferson, Louisiana, but be located all across the world

Chloe Blair: Nice. Kelly, would you like to go next?

Kelly Boudreaux: Sure. My name's Kelly Boudreaux. I'm co-owner, co-founder of Free To Be Power Yoga. Janae gave a nice summary of how we came together with Free To Be Power Yoga. So I won't repeat everything, but I'll say, the opportunities from this situation are the same as what Bradley said. It's not just to be in New Orleans, but to be with the global community that's out there right now and in such need of connection and community and movement in their home. That's what we're up to and moving into the online platform. And I'd also like to add to Janae's saying that we have three studios, now we have four because we have an online studio as well.

Chloe Blair: Awesome. Thank you so much Kelly. And Sarah, would you like to go?

Sarah Waldmann: Hey. I'm Sarah Waldmann. I joined Roux as a member about four years ago, and then joined the crew of coaches and full-time employees three years ago. And exactly what Bradley said, beyond fitness we've also started offering one-on-one nutrition and this is something we were starting to explore with how to do this remotely. And it's been very interesting. It kind of gave us the push to pivot and figure it out.

Chloe Blair: Nice. Thank you. So I wanted to start just by asking all of you guys, this has been probably a little bit of a stressful and unexpected transition. I just wanted you guys to share with me maybe some of the challenges or the how of the transition. What you guys did and kind of how you guys developed an online community, and what that might've looked like.

Bradley Schneller: Yeah, so it's been tricky, right? Because we had to pivot on a daily basis in the beginning. And not only daily, but maybe okay, here's an idea for the morning. No, we gotta scratch that, do something totally different in the afternoon, right? And it went like that day by day by day. The other tricky thing is my wife and I, while we're trying to move this platform online, are also trying to raise a two-year-old and a six-year-old, and providing homeschool for them. And really a lot of the stuff we had to do, we couldn't delegate.

So we had to figure out how to manage that. And I'll say this, I'm not someone that has incredible work ethic just to be super honest. I'm more of an ideas guy, big picture guy. I like to build relationships, that type of stuff. But I have probably worked harder in the past 34 days than in the past year. It's been pretty nuts. And I just keep saying those who crush it right now will survive and thrive long past this. If you were slow to transition, if you were slow to make some decisions and you were just maybe paralyzed by the moment in the beginning, well the moment's passed you by.

It's too late now. So what we had to do was we formulated a plan in the beginning. This was what we want to do. And then Emily and I would split up our day in half where I would take the morning, she'd take the kids in the morning. And I would take the afternoon, she would take the kids in the afternoon. I would take the kids in the afternoon and she would work. And then we would just separate our tasks. This is what we're going to do, this is what we need to do. We would push that information to Sarah to build to the community. And that's kind of how every day went. And I'll be honest, I just found something new yesterday that I'm going to try to implement this week.

And Emily developed something on Friday, a new campaign to not only maintain our community, but to build it right now. So we're constantly changing, constantly moving forward. And trying to introduce new products or revenue streams to what we currently do.

Kelly Boudreaux: I connect so much to what Bradley said in every aspect of it was not just a day-by-day decision. It was minute-by-minute. With our team because we still have our three managers on board with us supporting and moving this forward. We would come with them with something that was changed from the morning and they were like, wait, what happened? It was like, guys, you have to understand, it's going to change. It's going to continuously change and we can't get stuck on one way or one thing.

We just have to keep moving forward and listen to our community of what they want. Listen to what the world needs right now, and put that out there. And that's what our biggest focus has been. And I think the other thing, one of our core focuses is creating rich experiences for our members, everybody that's a part of Free To Be. And we've done a lot of personal touches. We've called every single member to hear from them. To see how they're liking the online content. What do they want? What do they need? How are you? How are you doing?

Just to make sure that we're staying in connection with them. And first, I think more than anything, it's like how are you doing? That's what builds community. That's what builds relatability. Like Bradley, you saying it's not just the business, it's the two kids at home. I have three kids at home. Being able to relate to people like that, that really stuck out to me as oh man, he's doing this with two kids at home. I get it. I see you, I get you. And amazing work. You're doing such great work. So it's constantly saying, not getting stuck on one thing. Moving and just recreating in the moment, moment-by-moment. I think that's what's going to keep us in the game. And like Bradley said, if we're three steps behind, we might not thrive. We might not make it through this. It's always staying on top of it.

And I definitely agree. I've worked harder this past month than I have in a really long time. It really is like building out a new location.

Sarah Waldmann: Yeah. And I have to say it's been really impressive to me to watch ... Bradley is the idea man sitting in our Monday meetings. Bradley's got the ideas. And Emily is the task manager. She creates the list. She delegates everything. But we stay on target. We have an idea in mind, we're going to execute it to the best of our ability. And to watch that get completely thrown out the window, especially when all of this happened, we had a few really big events coming up back to back to back.

And to just watch them adapt and roll with the punches was really impressive. And it's been interesting, I think our focus for the last month has just been how do we continue to connect with our members like you said Kelly. Getting in touch with them all the time. Not only seeing how they're doing, if they're doing class, but how they're feeling, what is stressful for them? Any way we can help them with that. But now shifting to, okay, now that we are in touch with our members and we feel like we ... I don't know that we'll ever really have a handle on it, but are kind of ... We feel like we're giving them what they need. They're communicating with us. How can we reach out to others past that in the larger community?

Janae Holmes: Yeah. And I think also yes, having the kids at home, I've got two at home as well. And we with our team made the decision to close the studios and build this online presence in a matter of hours. And one thing that's been really helpful for Kelly and I and our team is understanding that we can make these changes. And it doesn't have to be perfect right off the bat. We're working quickly, but it's not perfect. None of us are these online tech gurus who know how to build out these platforms and we've never had experience in this before.

Yes, it's exciting and it's intriguing and there's totally new things that we're learning every single day. But we're not experts in the field of an online presence. So giving ourselves and our team some grace in figuring it out. And really without straight up asking our community, but our community is understanding of this that, hey, we've never done this before. And thank you for your feedback. Thank you for being along this ride with us. It's so supportive and it makes me feel like, okay, we're doing something that people need, people want, people are excited about even though it's not perfect.

The first Instagram Live class that we taught, it was that Monday that everything closed. And we were figuring out, okay, how do we put livestream up on some platform? And we figured, okay, let's try Instagram. We could do it tonight, right? And it was like 2:00 and we led a class at 5:45. And my phone fell off the chair four times and I went over time and it cut off at 60 minutes and I didn't know that Instagram shut off at 60 minutes.

And it was just people laughed about it. I went right back live after the 60 minutes and I was like, "Hey, I don't know what just happened." And it's been great. People appreciate it. And like Bradley said, we got to move quickly. And moving quickly may not be perfect, and it's okay. And we've learned in the last 30 plus days how to get better at it.

Chloe Blair: I'm curious to hear what are the biggest challenges you guys have faced? It could be personally or just with building the community out, what are some of the bigger challenges and fears that you guys have had to overcome and deal with throughout this? Or even just in general with building the community that you guys are doing?

Bradley Schneller: Yeah. So I think it's a mix of business fears and personal fears. And mixed with depression. It's really odd. When people ask, how are you doing? I say, hey, it goes by the hour, right? In the morning I might be fine, in the afternoon I might be in a terrible mode. For example, last Wednesday I believe, this previous Wednesday we got the money for the advance on the EIDL and the PPP deposited into our account. And I'm like oh, this is a fabulous day. We're set. We're going to be ready to keep our full-time staff employed for a while.

This is going to be good. And then I think later that night ... I don't remember the exact day, but later that night is when Mayor Cantrell recommended to cancel all

the large events in the fall. And then I immediately followed that up with someone who saw that we might be going in and out of this quarantine until 2022. And I was like, well shit, this might be way different than I thought. And we might need to be prepared to move everything online for a really long time.

And that all of a sudden became really daunting to me. And I had to process that. And it's not like I had a couple of days to sit on it and meditate about it. It's like, all right, I think about this. What are we going to do tomorrow to start to move towards this? And so that's really been the tough part or the challenges, is not knowing what lies in the future. But I'll say this, if we make a move towards the worst case scenario with what we provide, then anything less than the worst case scenario, we'll be doing great.

Janae Holmes: Yeah, I agree with all of that. I've had moments in the morning that I'm feeling so overwhelmed and totally like I don't know how I'm going to get through this between homeschooling my kids. They're three and five, so the homeschooling isn't all that structured anyways. But the fact that they're home with us, my husband's home working as well, and then I might be having a really tough morning and really feeling sorry for myself. Feeling like I want to stay curled up under the covers all day long. And then later on in the day I get an email from a community member just pouring love and support to us. And how we're changing their life by continuing doing what we're doing.

And I'm like, okay, I got this. And it's just a ... It's literally I feel manic sometimes, just minute-by-minute of 'I'm good, I'm not. I'm good, I'm not.' And so when people are asking, how are you? I'm like, I don't know. Kelly and I are on the phone constantly just in support personally of one another. We're in the same stages of life with our kids and obviously the business. And we've got over 50 teachers who we're also staying in touch with. Making sure they're okay, wanting to support them. And then all of our members. And it's just the constant ... That's the challenge that's been for me, of these ups and downs just kind of mania of ... I feel like I don't have two feet on the ground at all times, which normally I do feel like I've got a handle on things.

And it's just kind of being okay with that, and continuing to not beat myself up and not stay cuddled up under the covers all day. It's not an option if we're going to thrive and if Free To Be is going to exist long term.

Kelly Boudreaux: Yeah. It's the same. The biggest challenge is just the yo-yo of the back and forth feelings of oh, we got this. Oh my God, do we really have this? I think the biggest challenge for us or for me is wrapping my head around: we have three locations. So we have ... Are all of them going to survive? That's the reality of this, of how long we're going to be in it. And trying to make the right decisions and not get paralyzed by the decisions of what to do that's going to be best for the whole of the business is really what I'm looking at right now for us financially.

We're still waiting on the loans to come through and all that stuff. We haven't heard back. And so seeing what that is going to provide for us, and do we have to make some tough decisions during this time so that we can survive the whole thing?

That's probably the biggest challenge that weighs on me day in and day out. And then of course the three kids at home is the other challenge that is beyond ... Actually, it's funny, I used to wish ... I wanted to try homeschooling my kids. Now I'm like, I don't know if I like this idea.

I have a six ... Well, no, he just turned seven. Seven, five and one. And it's the time management. There's so much work that I want to get done, and my husband's still working because he's in essential business for a grocery store. So it's me at home with the kids. So now I'm just trying to find time management to work when I can, piece it in there so that we can keep pushing this thing forward because I do believe we're treating the online platform as our fourth studio right now because it's going to be there for the long term.

And like Bradley said, the unknown, it's like we can't control this. There's nothing we can control. All we can do is live minute-by-minute, day-by-day and keep moving forward. That's it.

Sarah Waldmann: Yeah. I can identify with the roller coaster, but I do not have kids. So I don't have that added layer, that added stress in all of this. I do find that I try to be a very helpful person. And so the first couple of weeks in all of this, there's just a lot of anxiety and guilt about not being able to go help. I remember telling Bradley like, hey I can come take the kids ... Or wanting to take the kids for a couple hours just so they could reset. Things like that. But I will have trouble getting out of bed in the morning and sticking to my kind of self-imposed routine.

But then fast forward to the afternoon and I have nutrition clients that I will check in with, and they are firing on all cylinders. And hearing their excitement and that kind of thing gets me ... I skipped into the kitchen yesterday after a check-in while my husband was pouring wine. And I was like, let's go walk the dog. It's a great day. But personally, the other just big stress is I love them dearly, but I was not expecting to have to parent my parents at this point in my life, which has been very interesting. Keeping them home, keeping them safe. They dropped something off that was supposed to be a porch drop-off for example yesterday. And they tried to come inside.

And having to fuss at them on the corner with something. But it's all over the place, and I think it will be for a little bit.

Bradley Schneller: I thought it was interesting what Kelly said about making the decisions that are best for the business to survive after this. And I've thought about that a lot. And I've actually considered this as an opportunity to maybe correct some growth mistakes that we made over the past seven years. Where coming out of this, I believe when the gyms finally do open up or the studios finally open up, there's going to be a ramp-up period.

It's not just ... Because we've lost maybe I want to say about 20% of our membership, okay? Went on hold or cancellations. And maybe one or two was like, oh, I don't find the online product valuable. But the other 38 people, 40 people that

canceled or are on hold, they lost their job or they're in some type of financial situation. So I totally empathize with them. And I'm not expecting them to support us when they can't support themselves.

So those types of people though, they're not ... When we open up, they're not automatically going to jump back in with membership. They need their jobs to open up before they can jump in with us. So that will give us the opportunity to slowly introduce our class schedule back. And maybe we change some things in terms of our class structure. Maybe it'll allow us to use our online platform as a down sell to hey, maybe you can't afford gym membership. Let's look at our online platform and then have a couple of different options with our online platform.

Our intentions are to offer ... And I don't know how it is with you guys with the yoga studio, but for us it'll be membership options for virtual classes, programming, et cetera. And then we'll have just here's your fitness in a tutorial video, which will be a cheaper option. And then we'll have meditations with that, mobility work, all that kind of options where we've never dreamed of having this many options before. But it is an opportunity to completely revamp our product.

Janae Holmes: Thank you for prefacing that too about supporting the community members with what they've got going on because we're totally in the same boat. We've had a bunch of cancellations or suspensions due to getting laid off or being furloughed or whatever. And it's like, yeah, absolutely. We don't have a blanket policy right now on canceling memberships. It's like, we support you. You tell us what you need because we do not feel right about having you pay us when you can't, when you're not making any money.

Bradley Schneller: Yeah.

Janae Holmes: And so that's why we are offering some free content to serve our community in a way that for those who can't afford it right now. And then yeah, developing an online platform, like a subscription basis just for online content is really exciting and new. And can for people who don't live in New Orleans anymore who used to be a part of Free To Be now get to be a part of it again. So there's so many opportunities in all of this. And seeing them as opportunities and not as challenges or not as step backs or setbacks. Yeah, it's exciting.

Sarah Waldmann: Yeah. I have gotten to ... I think Bradley does all of our programming for the gym. He writes all the workouts for all the classes seven days a week. And I've always thought they were good, but it has forced him to use a level of creativity that he would use sometimes. He would always look to keep things interesting, but that he was suddenly forced into this position to be very creative and have a lot of fun. That's how he approached all of this. And it's something we've been striving ... The goal at Roux has been always to take care of the whole human that walks in the door.

And a lot of ... We have the community and then we would think about, okay, fitness and nutrition and recovery. But now this is a time where we are truly getting to know and take care of each individual person that is sticking with us through all of this. And it's been really fun to watch this happen.

Bradley Schneller: I will have to say, in the very beginning when I would do my videos, each one of my ... Because I do video tutorials. I don't stand in front and participate in the entire hour class because that would just be a giant time suck for us, especially because we have the virtual classes. So what I would do is basically 14, 15 minute videos, me walking everyone through, doing demonstrations on the videos. Which is all fine, I still do that. But in my editing in the software I would add in gifs and music and pop-up faces and funny stuff that people were enjoying.

And after two weeks of that I'm like, I can't do this anymore. It's taking me two and a half hours to edit these videos. I'm like up until 11:30 PM at night editing these videos. I'm like, we're just ... If it's funny because of something I say, great. Otherwise ...

Chloe Blair: I've been very interested in what creates community, especially with everyone moving virtually because I know for me, I was a part of the community and still am. And it's just been interesting and different. I'm interested to know what you guys have seen specifically that is creating connection and community among your members. You guys mentioned checking in with people and asking how people are doing. And I think that was a really great takeaway. But there's even other ways that you guys are finding is really creating community and creating connection during this time for people.

Bradley Schneller: Yeah, so I think if you ask any small group fitness studio or yoga studio that's not some major franchise like Core Power or something like that, everyone would say community is what they do best, right? We all say that. We all say that, okay?

Janae Holmes: We all do say that.

Bradley Schneller: Right.

Kelly Boudreaux: We know community.

Bradley Schneller: But only so many people live it, right? And it's not just calling and reaching out. We have an app called Skipio that we use. And I see Sarah, Chelsea, Emily constantly, the texts going back and forth all day with our members, with checking in on people. But I'm not really sure, I don't think that is what creates the community. It's more or less allowing people to interact with each other. And so how do we give our members a chance to socialize with each other virtually, right?

So that might be the face group. It might be doing daily challenges with a hashtag where everybody can see what they're doing. So this past week we did daily challenges and I raffled off a \$25 gift card to a small business. And we did that every day. And so we went with a live video. We shot the video, showed the raffle. It got the chance for everybody to interact. We do a cocktail hour on Friday night where we have a big Zoom call. Everybody's drinking. We did it last night. It was nuts. So it's whatever you can do to allow that social interaction, albeit virtually.

Kelly Boudreaux: Yeah. I totally agree with that. I think the checking in with the members is definitely a way to maintain the community, to really support them and be for them. And then creating community virtually is just different ways for them to be interactive, exactly what Bradley said. The Zoom classes we have seen people just love it. Being able to see each other, being able to hear each other's breath together. Be with each other. We have the whole schedule launching next week. Kind of the way we have taken this whole thing is to release things maybe a week out. So we did the Instagram Live and we did the Zoom ... We're now doing the Zoom.

Just to keep people wanting more. Keep people in tune. Keep people really hungry for the community, for being together. So that's another way to keep creating community, is just keep things alive. Have the whole freedom program, and we have more things that will come to the table as long as this is going on. And then the other thing is, just highlighting what the good stuff people are doing out there too.

Supporting the community in what they're up to. Our members that are nurses and doctors, highlighting them on the Instagram pages and getting people in conversations, seeing what they're up to. Participate in what the global yoga community is doing so that we can be a part of something just so much bigger. Last night I was a part of the AYC global yoga event happy hour. And there were over 500 yogis together. And all in support of raising funds for wellness kits. So really seeing what other people are out there doing and supporting them in doing that too is going to create and build community.

And it's not just for the cause of bringing more members into our studios, but being for everyone out there and what they're up to. And looking at the small businesses that have pivoted their businesses to ... Like was it, I think it's Rick Rack that are making face masks now. They've taught the students how to sew. And one kid put out 700 face masks. And really noticing them and recognizing them is a way to build community and create it in what's happening right now.

Janae Holmes: I think one of the most successful ways that we've built community within our studio is being an invitation and a welcoming committee for anyone who walks in the studio's door. So it's like, welcoming people in as if they were coming into my home. And doing that on an online platform where we're getting people from all over, it's like somebody heard about Free To Be's livestream classes through a friend who doesn't live here, whatever. And it's still doing that, so it's the

little things of creating that same level of connection and belonging for people as they enter into the Zoom class, or their name pops up on the livestream Instagram. And still doing that virtual, everyone say hello to everyone. Type in the chat and give a wave. And using people's names as they enter in, and even I don't know them and I'm like, hey, where are you coming in here from or whatever? And it gives this sense of connection and belonging no matter where people are. I've seen friends of mine who live in New Jersey or someone who their Instagram handle was like, said something San Diego. And I was like, amazing. And letting them be a part of this all, so then they're going to have a rich experience and then share it with a friend, or forward an email to someone.

Now that it's all virtual it's accessible for anyone. And so we've got to stay on top of that mission of creating belonging and creating connection as they enter the door, which is opening their computer screen or their phone app or whatever. So those are our ways that we've continued to build upon the community. And it's just been ... It's so heart-lifting to see people from all over now joining. This is a silly thing, but our Instagram following has skyrocketed in the last month because people are craving what we're up to from all over. So it's really fun.

Sarah Waldmann: Janae, something I love you said is just using people's names. And that's something that Bradley has always thought of us as coaches. And I find really important. And in fact when we're all together when we're having class, something that I love is we start every single class at Roux with an icebreaker question. And everyone has to say their name and their answer. And some people feel really silly at first, but it becomes a staple and something you look forward to. And something that happened as we transitioned into the virtual classes, I must've heard from about 10 people that it was just so nice to hear my name, and feel seen. Because doing the workout has become much more than just working out. It's become stress relief. I will coach classes with people that are all alone in quarantine. And to hear their name and feel seen for an hour out of their day is huge. And then from there, because the community still feels so connected and is so engaged, they are so vocal on their own pages about Roux and sharing all of their experiences, which is really rewarding to see.

Janae Holmes: Yeah, I agree wholeheartedly. It's people want to be seen. People want to be heard. And without it, they're going to stay in isolation, which we already all are. So however we can pull them out of isolation, yeah, is a way to continue to build community.

Chloe: Thank you guys so much for sharing. I'm also curious, so a lot of the audience, they're membership-based, like associations. And I'm curious because associations sometimes struggle with shifting because a lot of them are older or well-established. So I think it's really interesting to hear from you guys, small business owners who are membership-based. And having to shift so quickly and respond directly to what your members are needing and what's needed in the

world right now. It's really incredible to hear all that you guys are doing. But I'm curious if you guys have specific things or advice if someone were hearing it who is in a similar situation as you who also has members, advice or tools even to help guide through this time? Or even just with making the hard decisions you're making and things like that?

Bradley Schneller: Well, I don't know how to phrase this right, but so I know from some of the Facebook groups I'm in with other fitness studios, that a lot of gyms went ahead and just automatically froze everyone's memberships or canceled their memberships. And I think that was a giant mistake on their part because A, you don't know what the future's going to look like for you. You don't know if they want to be frozen or canceled. The options should have been or the advice for the gym owner should've had hey, instead of just downgrading their membership automatically, why don't you try to create as much value as possible for what they're paying for? And then if someone can't handle it, then you deal with that on an individual basis.

But at the end of the day, you have to thrive as a business and survive this. And you have to think, hey, I want these people to have a community to come back to when this is done. So if I don't create that value now and I just hold everybody's membership, I'm putting my business in peril.

Kelly Boudreaux: Totally agree Bradley.

Janae Holmes: I couldn't agree more.

Kelly Boudreaux: Yeah. We did the same thing. We saw different studios doing different things. And what Janae and I hold true to is doing what we feel is best from us from our core values. And we knew that we just wanted to offer each member what they needed.

Bradley Schneller: Right.

Kelly Boudreaux: So we got out there. We got as much content, continuously are going to build as much content for them. And keep them in. And if someone has circumstances that they need a different option, it's there. That's why we have the Instagram Live because it's free for people that are losing their jobs, are moving away from New Orleans because they lost their jobs or are no longer in school. So it's just making sure that we're listening in and tuning in to what we think is going to work for our business and not actually listening to the outside noise of it all.

Which is hard because we see people doing different things and it's like, oh, should we have done that?

Bradley Schneller: Right.

Kelly Boudreaux: Should we have done that? And it's like, wait a minute, we have no answers to any of this. We don't know how long this is going to go on either. So I completely agree with everything that you said Bradley. It's like, we just have to keep continuing giving our members value and keep them in tune. And because more than anything, it's not just for us to thrive at the end of this, but it's for us to take care of these people. They're at home, they're isolated. They need this.

Bradley Schneller: Right.

Kelly Boudreaux: They need this right now. They need us. So why would we stop?

Bradley Schneller: I also just want to piggyback on that a little bit because I see that. Because I'm privy to all the communication between most of the members and either Emily or if it's through Skipio or Sarah or Chelsea, our team. And so I see a question every other day is, hey, are y'all going to continue to keep this membership the same? Or are you going to reduce it? And my wife is really fantastic at saying, well, yes, we're keeping everything the same. Are you doing the virtual classes? Are you seeing the workouts? Are you taking advantage of meditations? Are you doing this? Did you see all that information? Can we get it for you? Is there anything we're not providing for you?

So I think it's having confidence in what you're providing goes a long way. I know tons of owners that may not be as confident in what they're providing. And so automatically they'll be like, oh, well we can take off that for you. We could put your membership on hold. We can do that. And that's not the answer. You've got to have confidence in what you're producing as well.

Kelly Boudreaux: 100%. It's the same thing. We get the question, and the first thing is, have you seen all the online content? Because we also want to know is there a communication gap on our end that we need to learn from?

Bradley Schneller: Right.

Kelly Boudreaux: Are they getting the emails? Are they seeing Instagram? Are they following that stuff? They're getting inundated with all kinds of communication online right now. So making sure that they know of that and understand it. And then go, just move from the conversation from there and if they want to continue, great. And if they need to because this is what they need in their life, 100% we support you. We'll suspend it and we'll touch back whenever studios open. And then some people are like, I can't pay this, but I really want to give this to the studio. I'm like, okay. Whatever you need.

Janae Holmes: Yeah.

Bradley Schneller: We think that everyone will move out of the window, for sure. Right now it's a case-by-case basis where ...

Kelly Boudreaux: It has to be.

Bradley Schneller: Yeah. If it's someone that's been with us for a long time, they're super loyal, they participate in a lot of things, they've referred people, and they're like, hey, I lose my job. I'm like, cool, we're going to give you the rest of the month for free. We'll reevaluate it next month. If it's somebody that's just like, hey, I need to cancel. Well what's going on? And they're just kind of shitty about it, all right, bye. See you later. To be honest, we've had a couple cases like that and we're very in tuned and there's some people where I'm like, okay bye. Please don't come back when we reopen.

Kelly Boudreaux: Yeah, we've had people, some people will just be like, y'all need to stop the membership because we're closed. The studio doors are closed. I'm like, the studio's doors are closed, but we've also done X, Y, Z to have the value of your membership. Here it is. Are you using it? Are you participating in it? Try it out, and if you don't like it, come back to me and we'll talk. It's just like, it's having those harder conversations right now too in a very genuine and loving way, but just being able to have the big ask of people too. Hey, try it out before you make the decision.

Bradley Schneller: Right.

Kelly Boudreaux: Because honestly, this is going to be the long haul of things. So you need to learn how to get online.

Janae Holmes: Yeah. And then on the other end of things, there's also a whole group of people who want to support us more than they were before. Asking us, what can I buy right now? We've just added a whole bunch of gift cards onto the ... And people want to donate money to the needs and wants. Some people still do have their jobs. Some people are actually doing better financially than they were before because of whatever field of work they're in or whatever. So it's like, I just feel that listening to our members is really the way that we're going to continue to thrive, and our business is going to sustain and it's going to thrive.

So yeah, I love what you guys are doing at Roux. Good work. I just, I'm so appreciative that there's another business out there who gets it and in a way that's supportive of each individual community member and not blanket.

Sarah Waldmann: Yeah. And I think it goes back to the community that you have built and the way you are communicating with people that they are willing to have those tough conversations and ask questions. And see if they can continue in some fashion and still support the gym. If they don't have a job or can't really afford it because that ... Talking about money and telling ... I remember just being a member

at Roux and it wasn't just the owners and the coaches. They were people I really valued.

And if I had had to go to them and say, hey I lost my job, I don't think I can do this. That's a really tough conversation to have with someone. If they are comfortable enough to ask those questions and still be involved and be that open and honest, I think is a huge testament to the community. But also a part of why this is working and why we're going to figure it out in the long run.

Chloe Blair: I'm curious, pretty much all of you keep coming back to listening to your members and having these conversations. And what are the ways that you're making sure this is done? How are you listening to your members? You've mentioned reaching out, but are there other ways that you're kind of maybe strategically making sure that people are getting heard and are getting listened to?

Bradley Schneller: Yeah, so initially it was just the individual conversations, reaching out. And that was kind of the beginning and ongoing. I know on Friday Emily, my wife, the co-owner of Roux ... Not co-founder. I'm the founder. But ...

Kelly Boudreaux: I hope she hears that piece.

Bradley Schneller: Oh she knows. But she put together maybe I think it was ... I saw it. It was a 15 question survey of what are we ... How are you enjoying what we're providing now? What do you like best? What do you wish we had? Do you see the value in what we're providing? It just kind of outlined everywhere to put some words in their mouth to maybe push them to give us feedback on what they want, what they need. We even had write-in sections like, is there anything you would see in addition? Are there class times that work for you that we aren't currently providing? Those types of things. So we have that going out I believe on Monday.

Sarah Waldmann: Right. And asking about ... You might reach out to someone because you haven't seen their face in a class in a while, or you haven't seen something on social media. But you don't lead in with that. You start by just asking how they're doing. And I feel like nine times out of 10 you can get the answer to your question just by talking to them and gauging where their head's at, their stress levels, why you haven't seen them around, things like that.

So starting all conversations with a check-in on the person themselves and how they're doing has been ...

Janae Holmes: It's also interesting that you say that, but also having an ... To the best of our ability kind of knowing as much as we can about each of the people we're reaching out to or knowing if they work in the medical field or something. So that when we reach out, we're hitting a relatability point or something. That's okay, you're a nurse. Thank you. Starting each conversation with things like that. Or that they're a waiter at a restaurant. Knowing that they likely have lost their job. So

having as much of our homework done as possible before individually reaching out to people like that. Like, oh we haven't seen you in a while. What's up?

Oh, how's it going at the hospital? Or did the restaurant close? Or things like that, it's just so important to be able to have that touchpoint.

Bradley Schneller: It's interesting you say that about the thank you part because I end each video tutorial saying it's like heartfelt. I'm like, hey, thank you for supporting our community. Thank you for supporting our staff. And thank you for supporting Emily and I. And that's how I end every video.

Janae Holmes: Yeah.

Kelly Boudreaux: Yeah, acknowledgement is huge right now too. It's just like, thank you for showing up at the end of the calls. Just being here together.

Chloe: I wanted to open up for you guys, obviously I don't own a membership based studio or anything like that. Just I want you guys if you have any questions for each other or points of things that you want to bring up that I might not have thought of, or something that you think would be relevant to other people who are also operating on a membership basis at this time.

Kelly Boudreaux: I think one of the biggest things for people out there is yeah, we touched on this. Look at what other businesses are doing, but really have confidence in your business model. And if the confidence is not there, dig deep okay? Dig deeper and figure out what that is, because this is the time to figure it out.

Bradley Schneller: Yeah, I would say if you're one of those persons that owns a business that's trying to go online right now and you're like, man, I don't know what I'm going to do today, I'm bored. You're done.

Janae Holmes: Oh God, that word bored is so triggering for me right now. It's so funny.

Kelly Boudreaux: Oh my God, I know.

Janae Holmes: How are you bored?

Bradley Schneller: Janae, we have a coach that he doesn't have any kids and his hours are reduced. He just sends Sarah and I pictures of him on his raft in his pool all day and talks about how he's bored.

Janae Holmes: I cannot.

Bradley Schneller: It triggers the hell out of us.

Janae Holmes: Yeah. And I get it though. I get that people's lives are different.

Bradley Schneller: Oh absolutely.

Janae Holmes: I'm like, we have kids and we are running businesses. So it's like everyone's lives are different. So yeah, I get triggered, but then I have to take a step back and understand that everyone's circumstances are different right now.

Bradley Schneller: I'll say this though, almost any action is better than inaction.

Kelly Boudreaux: Oh yeah.

Bradley Schneller: It's just move, keep moving, and you should be working on something at all times right now. I always say this, let's work real hard right now, so that when my parents can watch our kids, we can go for a week-long vacation as a couple without the kids. So let's do everything we can now because I don't want to vacation with my kids right now. I want a vacation without them. So let's work hard now so I can have that vacation without them.

Janae Holmes: Yes.

Kelly Boudreaux: I told my parents, I was like, just wait. I'm not even going to stop completely in front of your house. I'm just going to roll and the kids are going to jump out of the car with their bags and we're out.

Bradley Schneller: It's the TikTok of the car pulling up to the grandparents and the bags getting thrown out of the window and they're getting pushed out.

Kelly Boudreaux: That's totally going to be me.

Janae Holmes: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, unfortunately my parents live in Massachusetts, but as soon as they're able to come down, they're coming. Yeah. Yeah, I think aside from that for other membership-based businesses is very similar to what we've been talking about through the whole thing, is just any action is better than we're perfect. The longer we wait to put something out there even if it's not fully fine tuned or perfectly curated is way better and more supportive of what the membership basis needs. And being understanding, being relatable, working on an individual basis with people, these are all recommendations that I will stay true to throughout all of this. And any other crisis that we may face in the future is ... But yeah, there's definitely some things that I don't think we did great.

And we'll learn from that for next time, but I'm pretty proud of us. And I'm proud of what I've heard from you guys too Bradley and Sarah.

Sarah Waldmann: I've adopted the word pivot. We use it a lot, so being confident in who we are and being willing to pivot. And then being open and honest like you said in the very beginning Janae, when the phone fell during that first class. Just being open, being honest, having fun and that's I think they go hand-in-hand because if you're not confident in what you're doing when things like that mess up, it feels like a crisis in and of itself. But it feels like the right decision that it is true to you and your business at that moment, then you roll with the punch and you smile and you move on. And you learn from it.

Janae Holmes: And that creates so much more relatability with the members too, and a connectedness that people need right now. If we were to show up perfectly, makeup done, everything's so beautiful in the background and it's like people are like, oh, they're not like me. Or they're not in the same situation as me. And then they back away. And so that's part ... Yesterday I was teaching a class on Instagram and my three-year-old daughter jumped in with me. And I was like, you know what, this is what's happening right now. I'm teaching a class and I have to be okay that it's not perfect and it's not what it would be like if it were at the studio.

But that's not reality right now. Reality is, my three-year-old daughter in her princess nightgown and her messy hair is doing yoga with me. And it creates relatability. So as much as we can continue to do that, and other businesses can do that with their members is definitely the way to go.

Kelly Boudreaux: I think the other thing is also knowing that they're not alone in this too. Because we're all ... All businesses are affected right now for the most part, unless it's a hospital or a grocery store. Everything is really being highly affected. And there is a way to reach out and figure out what are things that we can be doing to move things forward? So I think it's like, don't get stopped in the overwhelm of what's happening or the fear of what's happening. And reach out to someone that you trust and love that'll be there and stand up for you. We have so many great mentors in our lives that we have been able to call and just say, hey, we have some fear around this.

What do we need to do? Or can we just talk through it and listen to us? So it's remembering that there's people out there that will support you and be a stand for you and not say, okay here's the time that this stops. Here's the time to just quit. Take the pause if you need to pause and take breaths. It's like here, you need those people to be there to lift you up and behind the scenes too.

Bradley Schneller: Love it.

Janae Holmes: Yeah, there's this video that Baptiste yoga put out there. And Baptiste yoga is a style of yoga that we primarily teach at Free To Be. And Baptiste yoga put out this video, I think it's on their Instagram main page about it's like, people will tell you, you're going to burn out. And it's like, I'm not a candle, I won't

burn out. It's just so good and for the people who are like, oh, you need to chill out. Oh, you're doing too much. Or, oh you need to take a break. It's like, those people aren't a stand for us right now specifically too. And yeah I encourage you guys to watch that video. It's just so good.

Bradley Schneller: I also think that all of the businesses that are moving online that have an abundance mentality are really going to do a very good job and be successful in the long term. I know a lot of gyms, and I don't know how it is in the yoga world, but in the fitness world or specifically the crossfit world, it's like everybody hates each other. And I've always been like, if you do a good job and you're not selling bullshit, I'm all in. We can be friends, right? Let's help out. There's more than enough people, even in a city like New Orleans to have a fitness studio on every corner.

Janae Holmes: Absolutely. Yeah, I couldn't agree more. You saying that there could be a crossfit on every corner and there's enough to go around, that's 100% how Kelly and I operate. It's like, another Baptiste-style yoga studio could open up across the street, and we wouldn't be scared. We're not operating right now or have we ever in the past out of fear.

Kelly Boudreaux: Right. I think more than anything, the biggest advice we can give to people is, you have to look for all the opportunities through this. There's so many opportunities that can be fulfilled. You just have to jump on them.

Chloe Blair: All right. Thank you guys so much for taking the time to get together.

Kelly Boudreaux: Thank you for putting this together, Chloe. And just very grateful that I could be a part of it. Free To Be to be a part of it. And then it's so great to meet you guys with Roux. I'm excited for the journey ahead for us.

Bradley Schneller: Absolutely.