



***AVIATION HAS CHANGED FOREVER.
WE HAVE A PLAN TO HELP YOU SURVIVE.***

STA: 35-05

TOOL KIT

SIX MODULES
TO HELP YOU
SURVIVE AND SUCCEED
IN THE NEXT
12 MONTHS

PMT: 26-07



As I write this, it's April 25, 2020.

The "Coronavirus Pandemic" has been a fact of life for the United States for a little more than a month – entering the fifth week. It is hard to maintain perspective of the time given the amount of activity that has transpired.

Roughly 70% of the economy is shut down in some form or another. While some states are attempting to "re-open" the vast majority of states maintain "stay-at-home" orders and many businesses are precluded from operating as they normally would.

For aviation, this time has been nothing short of a complete unprecedented cataclysm. The core model of commercial aviation is to move large numbers of people in tight quarters cheaply and efficiently. That model is inconsistent with social distancing requirements and a real concern of viral spread merely through respiration or by close proximity to others.

I won't bore you with the numbers – we all know how bad it is and we all know that the recovery will be long and potentially arduous. While we all hope for a quick recovery, most of us know that we cannot plan our business strategies around such hopes.

That is the point of this "toolkit" for aviation businesses. Our agency wrote it because we were tired of seeing the utter nonsense of what other alleged "gurus" were saying. Things like, "make sure you apply for a PPP loan," or "communicate with your employees during this difficult time."

Platitudes of idiocy.

Welfare checks and words of honesty may play a role in maintaining your business, but they won't contribute to the core activity of your business, which will need to be growth and sustained revenue.

This toolkit is about building that growth and sustained revenue. We didn't see anything like this, so we wrote one ourselves because we care deeply about our industry.

You're welcome to share your feedback with us – bryan@theaviationagency.com.


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MOD 1

MODULE ONE: A MINDSET TO SURVIVE

KEY POINTS OF THIS MODULE:

- ACCEPTING THE SITUATION "AS IT IS" IS THE FIRST STEP TO MOVING FORWARD
- MAKE THE DECISION TO PRESERVE – IT IS A CHOICE
- FIND SOME GRIT
- DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET



"It may sound strange,
but many champions
are made champions by setbacks."

Bob Richards

MODULE ONE: A MINDSET TO SURVIVE

ACCEPTING THE SITUATION "AS IT IS" IS THE FIRST STEP TO MOVING FORWARD

ACCEPTANCE IS KEY

We are beings who spend our entire lives attempting to achieve the impossible – stasis. Your body likes to maintain a constant temperature. Your metabolism attempts to maintain a constant stream of calories in and out. Our brains develop habits designed to reduce our mental processing requirements so that we can do the same things without having to think about it. We like to do the same things over and over. We talk about “work life balance,” and “life balance,” as ways to be happy. We conserve energy, we crave stasis.

Unfortunately, the world rarely gives us a break. We are constantly bombarded by stimuli and shocks, some minor and, some like coronavirus, are major.

Because we resist change, we perceive it as something to be largely avoided. The reality is that only through growth can we achieve more, be more, and become more. Only when we are forced to change do we change.

So, the key to resilience is really two things, accepting this fact, and deciding to persist in the face of changes we don't want or like.

TO QUOTE A COLLEAGUE,
“I'M SO DONE BEING PART OF A HISTORIC EVENT.”

I'm sure that many feel that way right now – a month and a half into this pandemic. The reality is that we probably have years to go before this part of history is “over” and we can move to a new challenge. So while I appreciate many people have had “enough” with Coronavirus, the reality is that how you do during this time of immense change will set the path you will be on for the next decade (if not longer).



Part of this module you will probably see as retrospective. The “crisis” in my mind happened March 9th in the United States, which was well over a month ago. The original “shock and awe” of the crisis has largely passed, and whether you wanted to or not, you’ve probably come to accept the “new normal” of no haircuts, trips only to the grocery store, and an endless stream of bad news on TV.

You may have heard of the “stages of grief,” with respect to deaths, divorces, or major life changes. This model was developed by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who was a psychiatrist and researcher at the University of Chicago. A series of articles in Life Magazine brought her theory about the “stages of grief,” into mainstream society. While you may know these stages, let’s quickly reiterate what they are:



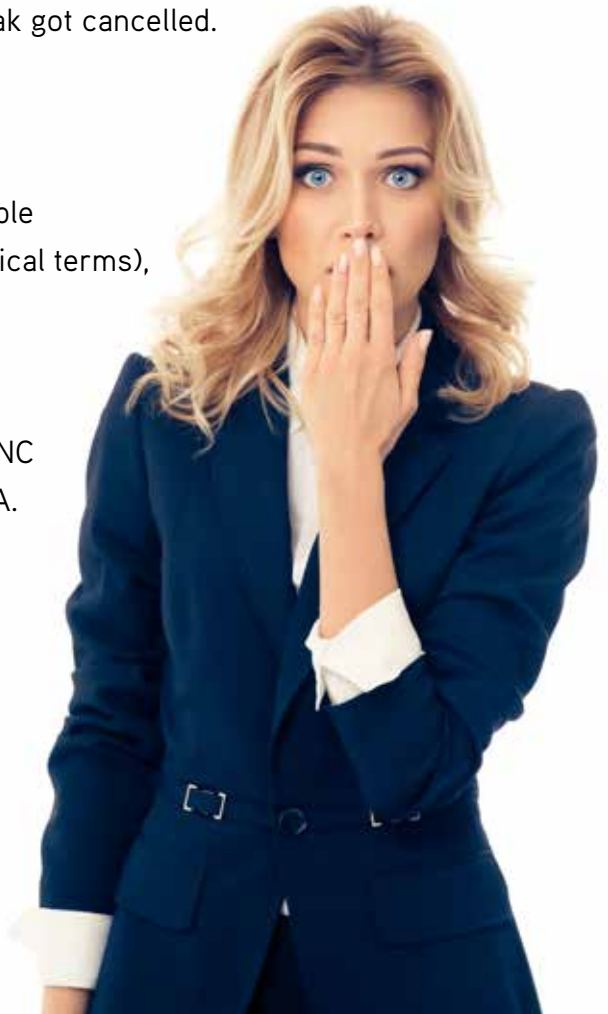
Only the most resilient and disciplined of people go through these steps quickly, or skip steps and get to the most important, acceptance.

You should think about what happened early in March when Coronavirus was declared a pandemic. Suddenly airplanes shut down, airports shut down, your workplace might have shut down. You couldn’t go to the bar. That trip you were going to take for spring break got cancelled.

Did you immediately accept it all and go “well – that’s that!”

Probably not. At first you were “in shock”. While we say people are “in shock,” they’re not actually suffering “shock” (in medical terms), what you were experiencing was an emotion - denial.

“This can’t be happening,” is something I heard the flight attendant say to me while I was flying home from Charlotte, NC and the Schedulers and Dispatchers Conference of the NBAA. I heard it routinely while I was at the conference.





Before working in advertising, I worked for several decades in communications, drifting in and out of politics, before spending nearly a decade in federal politics at the highest levels. While I won't reveal the name of the Senator who said this to me, it stuck with me as an important rule of not just politics, but life in general. This very senior Senator noticed I was exceptionally mad at some of his colleagues and even some of my own colleagues at the Department of Defense, for acting "as if" certain realities didn't exist in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sensing my frustration, he pulled me aside and said,

"BRYAN – YOU'RE GOING TO NEED TO LEARN A FEW RULES
IF YOU'RE GOING TO SURVIVE AT THIS LEVEL. THE MOST CRITICAL TO LEARN TODAY IS –
NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF SELF-DELUSION."

The other two rules were: never believe your own bullshit and it's easier to say "sorry" earlier than it is later.

Denial is a strong and powerful emotion. It's a coping and defense mechanism that is deeply rooted in our psyche because we despise any tips or imbalances in our stasis. We fight change tooth and nail until we have no other choice but to accept the reality.

The faster you can reach acceptance, the less pain people feel, the more likely they are to survive and show resilience in a crisis, and the better off those individuals will be.

In the next module, we're going to talk about the stages of a crisis. The faster you can accept (you don't have to like, just accept) what is happening, the most likely you are to take the steps necessary in the earliest part of a crisis to deal with the situation effectively.

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MODULE ONE: A MINDSET TO SURVIVE

MAKE THE DECISION TO PERSEVERE - IT IS A CHOICE

MAKING THE DECISION TO PERSEVERE

Because of the stages of grief (dealing with loss) are so ingrained in us it is hard for even the most disciplined to just weather any storm.

Discipline, perseverance, and resilience are like muscles. They need development, repetitive exercise, and failure to flourish. The “hardest of the hard,” people you can think of: special forces, survivalists, Sherpas, and the like, repeatedly train their perseverance instincts and skills.

The US military breaks men down, on purpose, explicitly to teach them that they can choose to persevere despite challenges. You have no doubt seen “BUD/S” school for the SEALs: frozen in the ocean, carrying telephone poles, cold, tired, and beaten. These strategies are all designed to demonstrate (without killing them) that as long as they are alive, they have the choice to persevere. Those who make that choice, successfully complete the training.

In my career at the Pentagon, what I heard routinely from such men in the special forces was, they all knew they were good, and that they were “bad ass,” before they went and did their special forces training. What they were not well prepared for was how fragile their “world” was and how it could be shattered. They recognized that only through repeated assaults to their beliefs and psyche, did they finally find the “mental toughness” (which we will talk about – grit) and the will to persevere that would make them great soldiers.

It is that experience, knowing you have the choice to persevere, that separates those who are consumed by crisis from those who flourish during and coming out of it. That is the single factor between those who do well and those who do not – they made a choice to persevere.



The will to persevere, making that decision, is how you get through the anger, bargaining, and most importantly – the depression, stages of loss.

Unfortunately, you have to suffer real losses and setbacks to find this will to persevere. We are seeing right now with Coronavirus large swaths of this industry making the decision to just accept whatever comes, or worse, continue to deny there is a problem. Very few businesses have made the decision to persevere.

When I talk with businesses, inevitably they want to do “something” to get new clients during this time. Inevitably, when we get to the discussion about cost and pulling the trigger, there is hesitation. I know in this moment how they answer this question determines whether or not they have made the decision to persevere, and that question is:

DO YOU BELIEVE YOU WILL BE IN BUSINESS
AT THE END OF THE YEAR?

When I hear, “I don’t know,” or “I’m not sure,” or “I hope so,” then I know in all likelihood the guy is probably done. He hasn’t made the decision to persevere, and thus, the chances of the business surviving are at best 50-50 and at worst 10-90 (and not in his favor).

If you ask me that question it is emphatic, “Yes, we will be in business at the end of this year. We expect half of the agencies in our field to collapse, if not more, and half of the agencies in the world of advertising to collapse. We will not be one of them.”

This isn’t some positive thinking exercise. You are making a decision. You have to follow up that decision with some degree of sacrifice, discipline, and mental grit.





Along with acceptance, making the decision to persevere means you have to take stock in yourself, what's available, and then start planning immediately to put your resources into action and to "pivot" if necessary (something we're going to talk about in a later module.)

Specifically, you need to focus, once you've made a decision to persevere, on the following:

You need to really be honest with yourself about the situation. Your strengths. Your weaknesses. Things you can control and cannot control. If necessary, use a pad and paper.

You need to assess the best outcome and the worst outcomes. I'm not suggesting you stress about either, but you have to know what the "trade space" of outcomes looks like.

For example, in the present case – a great outcome would be you get a loan from the Federal Government, you use that 2.5 months to pivot, and you wind up making more money and doing new business you had not even thought of prior to Coronavirus. That is going to happen for some people and some businesses. The other side of the spectrum could be, you don't get a loan, or you get a loan, you can't pivot, your overhead crushes you, and you are forced to shut down.

Honestly, really strong people who have strong mental toughness, grit, and are seasoned in perseverance – they are aware of the "downside" scenarios abstractly, but they focus intently on what is necessary to create an outcome they find positive. In my own case, I'm aware of the downside risks and the downside scenarios, but I am intently focused on the pivot, the deployment of resources, and the generation of new business. It's what led to me writing this document and why we're holding the webinars, seminars, and doing the outreach, that we're doing.



You need to assess your liabilities and your assets.

I don't mean you should look at these things in terms of a balance sheet, although that may be helpful. In some cases, assets (clients and their income), may be liabilities if they don't perform well enough to pay you. Rarely are liabilities going to suddenly become assets (although they conceivably could – I can envision certain circumstances where money you owe others winds up forgiven, or monetization makes the debt less valued over time).

In most cases you need to look closely at your sources of revenue and to what extent those sources of revenue are stable. The renter paying you for office and hangar space may suddenly create a liability if that tenant can't pay. But simultaneously, if you can negotiate a forbearance with the bank for three months on paying the note on that hangar, maybe you can pivot.

But you have to get realistic about what is an asset and what is a liability. In general, your people, your skills, your business processes, and access to capital and cash (which is presently in a crunch because of a market credit collapse), are assets. Everything else is probably a liability.

You need to make a plan of action.

Part of what I'm going to give you in this toolkit is what that plan of action should probably look like and what you'll need to do to survive. We had to do it for our agency, you'll have to do it (if you haven't already) for your business.

MODULE ONE: A MINDSET TO SURVIVE

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MODULE ONE: A MINDSET TO SURVIVE

FIND SOME GRIT

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Let's define grit. Grit is the perseverance and passion to achieve long-term goals. Sometimes you will hear grit referred to as mental toughness. Angela Duckworth, a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, suggests that grit is a strong predictor of success and ability to reach one's goals.

It's not enough to just make the decision, and go through the steps I've defined, you have to be ready to suck it up and tough it out for the long haul.

I sincerely hope I am wrong in the statement I am about to write:

The Coronavirus Crisis will take at least three years to resolve itself, it will transform and galvanize the 21st century the way World War II did to the 20th century, and there will be considerable death, poverty, and suffering created around the world in the wake of this pandemic.

If you accept what I've written as true – then you better find some grit.

Grit is about sacrifice and discipline. You're going to get up every morning at 4:30 and go to bed every night by 9. You're going to do those workouts. You're going to focus on and work your plan.

Everyday.

Not deterred because it's raining. Not deterred because you want to sleep in. Not deterred because Tiger King has some new episode of idiocy.

You do it day in and day out. That's grit.

Mental toughness is like a muscle. It needs to be worked to grow and develop. Grit isn't about getting an incredible dose of inspiration or courage. It's about building the daily habits that allow you to stick to a schedule and overcome challenges and distractions over and over and over again.

Mentally tough people don't have to be more courageous, more talented, or more intelligent — just more consistent.





Grit comes down to your habits. It's about doing the things you know you're supposed to do on a more consistent basis.

It's about your dedication to daily practice and your ability to stick to a schedule.

THIS IS WHY SO MANY PEOPLE ARE FAILING AT THIS TIME.

Working from home, being self-directed, being responsible for your own productivity, are things that 99% of American workers have no idea how to do. They don't know how to keep a schedule if they can't punch the clock. They don't know how to make sure they're doing the things they need to do if their boss isn't hanging over them.

Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, we're exceptional at this type of discipline. We have to be. Nobody tells us what to do or when to do it. As a consequence, we have to set our own regulators and our own objectives. We measure our own success and failure; we measure our productivity.

Entrepreneurs have grit; but it is hard *won primarily from failure*.

You'll stumble, you'll slip, but get back up and get back at it.

Perseverance without persistence is a waste of effort. Persistence without perseverance is a waste of time.

Develop some grit.

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MODULE ONE: A MINDSET TO SURVIVE

DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET

DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET

I know that in this document (and this is only the first module), I'm throwing a lot at you. That's why I made videos, and we've made companion pieces, for this document. There's a lot here to absorb. The good news is – the fact you are here, trying to absorb it, probably means you already have a growth mindset.

What do I mean by a “growth mindset”?

There has been a fair amount of research done on human success. One of the striking factors when you read this body of literature, is that what you think to be possible is typically a self-fulfilling reality. As the famous line from Henry Ford says, “Whether you think you can, or you think you can't... you're right.” It turns out that Ford was more correct than he might have realized. Your attitude determines how much success or failure you'll experience in any situation. It colors everything at both the subconscious and by extension the conscious levels.

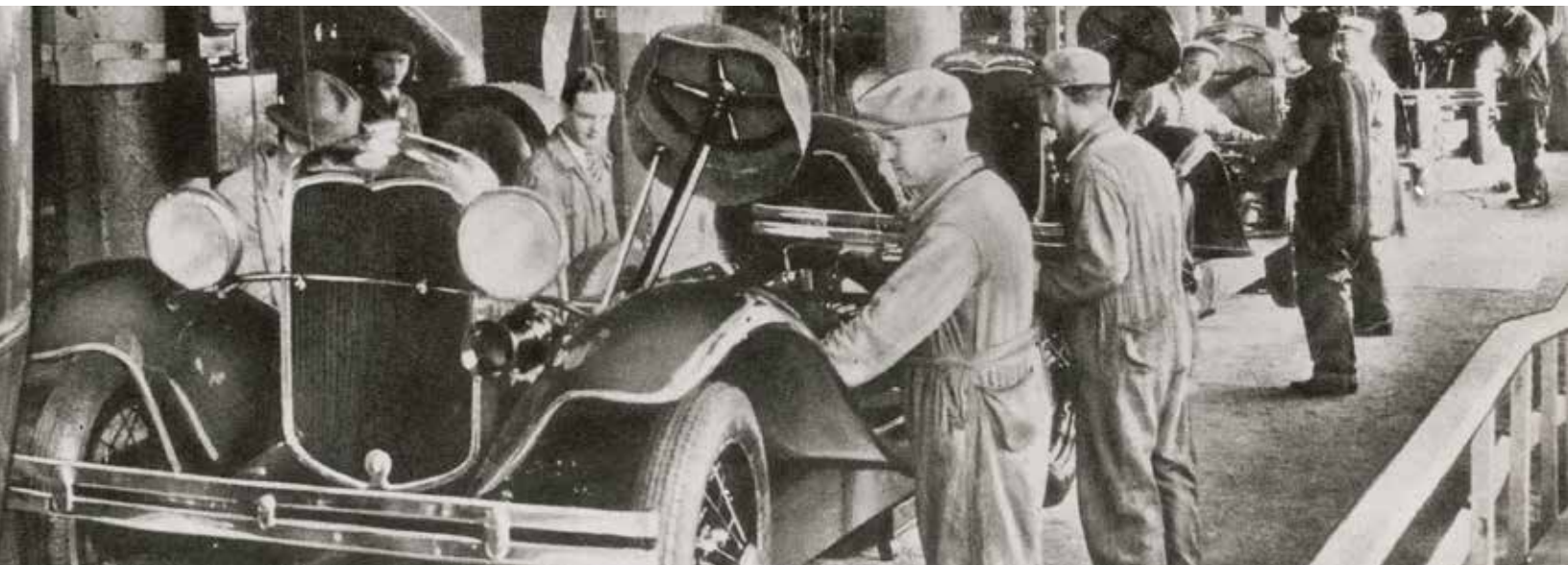
I don't want to go too deep into this, but there are some great authors in this arena to explore. If you haven't read these books I highly recommend doing so now:

Innercise, by John Assaraf

The Power of Habit, by Charles Duhigg

Atomic Habits, by James Clear

To give you the “BLUF” on these three books – what we focus our attention on, and build our habits around, is what we become and achieve in life. Attention matters predominantly in determining success because what we believe to be true is what we make true.





So with all of these as a background, there are two predominant mindsets at play in the human brain: the growth mindset, and the fixed mindset. (Again, not to give you even more reading, but “Mindset: The New Psychology of Success,” by Dr. Carol Dweck, is the primary research that posits this idea.)

The growth mindset, believes that intellect, outcomes, and change, can be cultivated. The fixed mindset believes that the status quo is immovable.

Now you may be saying, ok, so what? So I'll believe everything is changeable and be saved! I wish it was indeed that easy.

If I were to ask you what you think you're good at, and what you think you're not good at, you might say to me, “I'm not good at math.”

That's a fixed mindset. A “fixed mindset” assumes that our character, intelligence, and creative ability are static givens which we can't change in any meaningful way, and success is the affirmation of that inherent intelligence, an assessment of how those givens measure up against an equally fixed standard; striving for success and avoiding failure at all costs become a way of maintaining the sense of being smart or skilled.

A growth mindset might say, “Well, I'm not very good at math right now. I think if I applied myself, I could likely get very good at it.” A “growth mindset,” on the other hand, thrives on challenge and sees failure not as evidence of unintelligence but as a heartening springboard for growth and for stretching our existing abilities.

Out of these two mindsets, which we manifest from a very early age, springs a great deal of our behavior, our relationship with success and failure in both professional and personal contexts, and ultimately our capacity for happiness. Changing them is not easy, but it can be accomplished largely through changing our habits, reinforcing what we want to change consciously and subconsciously. Accepting the process is slow but rewarding.



WHAT'S NEXT?

How does this manifest itself in this time of crisis?

I'm going to ask you to think about things and do things that you may say "We can't do that."

That's a *fixed mindset*.

It may be, and probably is, true that right now you cannot achieve that goal. Rather than let that mindset fix you in place, you have to genuinely adjust your thinking to, "Right now, we don't know how to do that. But, we're going to figure out how to do that, so that our business can survive and thrive."

That's a growth mindset.

You will encounter problems in trying to pivot and survive this crisis. There will be things you don't know. There will be things that won't break your way. There will be things that will need to be figured out. Resilience requires you to learn, pivot, and overcome obstacles. Those who have a growth mindset are the ones most likely to achieve success.