

SelfInformed

Published by the National Association for the Self-Employed

April 2021



Member Spotlight
**Dr. Sarah
Duke and
Shane Duke**
Austin Community Wellness

An illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing a pink coat with black triangles and black pants, walking in the rain. She is holding a large yellow umbrella. The background shows a city street with colorful buildings, a yellow car, and a grey car. Rain is falling all around. A grey umbrella is also visible in the upper right corner of the page.

8 Rainy Day Improvements to Your Small Business

If you've had some business downtime in the past year, you're far from alone. But as the saying goes, "April showers bring May flowers," and it's vital that small business owners see the silver lining in all that cloud cover. In fact, rainy days can turn out to be the most important planning time for your small business.

Business analytics firm **McKinsey & Company** estimates that millions of small businesses “will need to make extreme changes to survive” because of the Covid-19 pandemic. That means business owners are rethinking everything from the health and safety protocols in place in their public establishments to the staffing levels they relied on in the past.

What else can a small business owner or independent entrepreneur do to weather big changes? In this article, NASE covers eight ways to improve the resilience of your business for the days ahead.

1. Finetune Your Brand

All businesses, products, and services have a brand, whether it's part of a highly conscious marketing strategy or the culmination of years' of customer service. A brand includes everything from a name and logo to a reputation for quality.

Business owners often give a lot of thought to branding right in the beginning — when you're choosing a name, creating your signage, deciding how you want to pitch your services — but over time, the brand can fade into the background while work rolls in. Years can go by without a review of that all-important first impression.

If you find yourself in a business hibernation period this year, it's the perfect time to refine your brand and marketing to focus on your strengths, including some strengths that might be new to you. Start with a few questions. Ask yourself:

- What problems does my company solve? How are my solutions unique?
- Are there ways my offerings have broadened to serve customers (and potential customers) in new ways?
- How has my business overcome recent challenges?

It's a badge of honor: You are reliable, resilient — and you're here for your customers. Although they're not part of your core brand, adaptations like offering curbside or delivery service, or being responsive via new technologies and on social media are practices worth showcasing to customers.



2. Upgrade Your Website

A slow period is the ideal time to create or revamp your company's website, add a portfolio or video content, or establish your online shopping functionality.

For many businesses, a website serves primarily as a home address on the internet. It's a place customers find your phone number, physical address, and business hours. As a baseline web presence, it serves its purpose the way a listing in the Yellow Pages of the phonebook does. It assumes, however, that visitors will come find you.

A website can also be so much more. If it's been a few years since you launched your website, it's worth taking a look at new multimedia, communication applications, eCommerce and marketing tools. Google offers **business analytics and services** to help make sure you show up when potential customers look for your services, and drive relevant local searches to your website.

A visual refresh of your website may also be in order. Design trends come and go, but **mobile-friendly and accessible design** is key.

3. Refresh Your Social Media

Take some time now to revisit your social strategy. At some point, many business owners create social media pages across multiple platforms — only to let some stagnate, become outdated, or unmoderated. The last thing you want is for customers to be reaching out on an account you don't check regularly.

If you have some dormant accounts and feel overextended online, make the decision now to either revive or deactivate some accounts. Not every business needs a Pinterest board!

On the other hand, social media might be a neglected opportunity for your business, especially in a period when more people are doing business and finding solutions online. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn are all rich with potential to engage and discover new customers.

Unlike virtually every other marketing platform, they're free. Your investment is whatever time and content you put in. Social media platforms are also teeming with people all day long.

Beyond the Facebook and Twitter types of social media, don't neglect the possibilities afforded by YouTube, TikTok, and the booming world of podcasts. All the media you generate on one platform can be amplified across your other channels and on your own website to increase traffic to your business.

4. Sharpen Your Skills

Mastering new skills is one of the best investments you can make in yourself and your business, but it's often hard to find the time.

Every moment counts! Each hour of downtime you have now can be an investment in your skillset or education.

Online training courses as well as (free!) Youtube tutorials, podcasts, and good old-fashioned how-to books abound. Beyond the internet, your local community college or university offer professional development courses in marketing, accounting, and business to sharpen your skills.

A slow period in work is an optimal time to introduce software or processes into the workflow, giving yourself and your employees time to perfect a new system.

5. Clean Up

Spring cleaning is a seasonal tradition, but while we clean the cobwebs from the office corners and open the blinds, the maintenance of certain staples — computer databases, filing cabinets, and storage closets — is often overlooked.

Some areas of our workspaces evade routine cleaning because they contain sensitive data or are not accessed on a daily basis. In other cases, it may be that a database or machine is too integral to daily operations to be taken offline for maintenance.

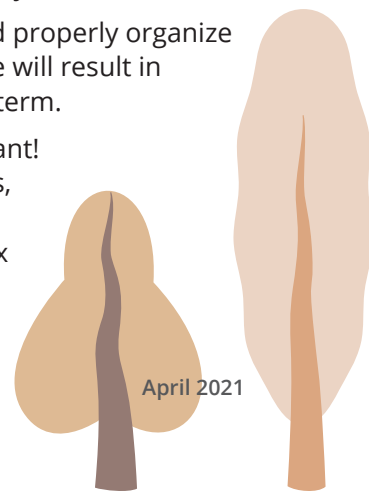
In either situation, a slow period in your business is an excellent time to combat the clutter. With nonessential staff working from home, it's easier to sort and shred files, replace and clean computers and phones, and even rearrange and repaint an office space.

Cleanup isn't just good for on-site work stations. At home, we tend to think of cleaning, rearranging, or organizing as a form of procrastination. But it's a productive use of your time!

In fact, many business owners and employees came home to telework last year on an impromptu basis, meaning their office "work stations" were set up on the fly in spare bedrooms or even in the middle of family rooms. What started as a temporary situation became a state of permanent disorganization — and that brings built-in inefficiency and distraction.

Taking the time to rearrange and properly organize files and desks in your downtime will result in productivity gains over the long term.

Digital cleanup is no less important! A slow day spent backing up files, cleaning computer systems, and even organizing your email inbox *will* pay off.



6. Reach Out to Customers

Take time to touch base with customers with a phone call or email to say hello. They may not be in a position to buy from you, but an honest call to check in and touch base can strengthen your business relationship. A single conversation is worth more than ten heartfelt “in these trying times” emails.

So you get a client on the phone: What do you talk about beyond sales?

First, keep in mind that your circumstances are being felt across the board in this economy. It’s likely that many of your clients — especially in business-to-business industries — are going through the same thing you are. If you’re seeing a dip in business, your customers may also have unwelcome downtime and feel bored or unproductive working from home.

Talk about how you are coping, ways you’re moving beyond the slow times, and ask how they’re grappling with their challenges.

Sharing in the experience can give you new ideas on how to cope, too. And a friendly call builds loyalty, which can translate into future sales.

7. Self Care

A slow period doesn’t translate into lower stress; in fact, less business can mean *more* pressure and the urge to put in longer hours for less. But that’s a quicksand you won’t get out of by struggling.

When the pandemic forced millions of Americans to work from home, many thought the lockdown would free up hours lost in the daily commute. It’s true: **according to one estimate**, between March and September of last year, Americans spent 60 million fewer hours on the road. But instead of using all that time to sleep more or take better care of ourselves, many of us just worked during our former commute hours instead.

In light of this massive increase in productivity, it’s important to recognize that taking care of your physical and mental health is one of the most valuable investments you can make in your business. Resist the temptation to fill all your extra time with extra work.



8. Get Your Finances In Order

April showers are the perfect weather for planning a rainy day fund. The abrupt economic slowdown last year taught many small businesses a bitter lesson about having an emergency plan and savings in place.

Downtime in your business is a good opportunity to informally audit your books and scrutinize your budget. Is your recordkeeping as good as it could, or should, be? Do you have your tax records in order?

Obviously, if less money is coming in, the money going out matters more. Small drips of outbound dollars can add up. Chances are there are ways to tighten your spigot. Are you continuing to spend on monthly subscriptions or services you may not need?

For more tips, contact the **experts at NASE**. Our licensed professionals are here to help your business bloom.



Member Benefits

Visit [NASE.org](https://www.nase.org) to learn more about the following benefits!



*Get the best prices in your area,
and save up to 80% with GoodRx
Prescription Savings.*

Stop paying too much for your prescriptions!

At GoodRx, we believe everyone deserves affordable and convenient healthcare. We build better ways for people to find the best care at the best price. Our technology gives all Americans — regardless of income or insurance status — the knowledge, choice, and care they need to stay healthy. We're here to help.

[Click Here to Save](#)

How GoodRx Works: *Saving up to 80% on your prescriptions is as easy as 1-2-3.*

- 1. Find Free Coupons.** Coupons work at virtually every U.S. pharmacy. Prices may even beat your insurance!
- 2. Show Coupon to your pharmacists.** Text, email or print your coupon. No approvals or paperwork needed.
- 3. Save up to 80%.** Save on all your family's prescriptions. Coupons work for refills too!



SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH GRANTS Sponsored by Dell Technologies

Dell Technologies is supporting small business growth by sponsoring the **May 2021 NASE Growth Grant.**

Apply for the Dell business development grant from the NASE worth up to \$4,000!
Designed to help address a specific business need. [Apply Now!](#)

**APPLY
NOW**

You could receive up to \$4,000 for your small business, sponsored by Dell. The NASE has already awarded more than \$600,000 in Growth Grants to NASE Members just like you.

Grants can be used for Dell office equipment, marketing, advertising, hiring employees, expanding facilities and other specific business needs. You could be the next grant recipient. To be eligible for an NASE grant, you must:

- Be an NASE Member in good standing.
- Demonstrate a business need that could be fulfilled by the grant.
- Provide a detailed explanation of how you will use the grant proceeds.
- Show how the grant will improve your business growth and success.
- Offer supporting documentation such as a résumé and business plan.

Growth Grants are awarded at the sole discretion of the NASE. Unfortunately, not everyone who applies will receive a grant. Decisions of the selection committee are final and are not subject to appeal. No application feedback will be given. [Click Here](#) for recent grant recipients.

New!



Member Benefits

Visit [NASE.org](https://www.nase.org) to learn more about the following benefits!



Learn if Your Brand is Helping or Hurting Your Business

Are your sales and marketing efforts falling short? Your brand identity (*everything visual about your business*) may be undercutting your credibility.

Crowdspring's Brand Identity Grader can help.

- Get a free custom video review of your website.
- Your review will include actionable insights and tips to improve your visual brand.
- All reviews are conducted live by a branding expert from Crowdspring.

Don't let your brand hold you back. Get your free review today. (All brand reviews are completely private)

[Get Your Free Brand Identity Review!](#)



Shield yourself from tax penalties, the IRS and employee liability with help from the nation's largest and oldest payroll company specializing in the smallest of businesses!

For more information call:

Bri Compton
214.497.5655
Bri.compton@ADP.com

Mention your NASE Membership to take advantage of the NASE Member discount.



Save up to \$60 off business formation services and discounts on DBA filings and business license application packages.

BizFilings professionally forms corporations, limited liability companies (LLCs), and nonprofits faster than anyone else. BizFilings is committed to helping entrepreneurs and small-business owners learn about incorporation and its benefits, as well as helping them easily and affordably undertake this important business step without sacrificing quality.

[Click Here to Learn More](#)

Member Spotlight



Self-Employed Wellness

Dr. Sarah Duke is a Doctor of Chiropractic & Massage Therapist and Shane Duke is a Licensed Massage Therapist. Together they own and operate Austin Community Wellness PLLC in Austin, Texas. The goal of Austin Community Wellness is to bring balance back to your body so it can function optimally and help you live your best life.

When and why did you join the NASE?

Dr. Sarah at Austin Community Wellness has been a member of the NASE since October of 2018 because of its vast network of businesses that are there to help grow other small businesses. This has been an absolute essential platform for finding the resources that ACW needs to grow.

What inspired you to enter the field you are in?

Dr. Sarah started doing massage right out of high school to earn money through college, and she absolutely fell in love with helping people maintain their bodies. She wanted to go all the way to becoming a Doctor of Chiropractic, so she could help people on a more advanced level. Shane became a massage therapist in his early 20s as health and wellness have always been an important part of his life. He has never found anything else that has brought him as much passion and joy as helping the body heal naturally.

When and why did you start your business?

Dr. Sarah and Shane have dreamed about having a clinic together since before Dr. Sarah started chiropractic school in 2009, and after years of hard work, preparation and saving, they were able to break off from working for other people to open Austin Community Wellness April 1, 2017. They wanted to create a Mom and Pop healing journey for people that was all inclusive for total body care.

How do you market your business?

Austin Community Wellness markets itself primarily through providing top quality care that speaks for itself. Dr. Sarah and Shane have a longstanding reputation of excellent bodywork that has translated into a longstanding clientele base. Their focus has been Google reviews from clientele, but word of mouth has still brought in the largest percentage of new patients to the clinic. They send out review requests regularly to build their online profile, and they also create videos discussing the various topics that they address in a clinical setting that could impact other people's lives via their YouTube channel, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages. They have also created a video series discussing each individual treatment that they do in the clinic to give the patients a walk through of what to expect from beginning to the end while they are in the clinic.

What challenges have you faced in your business?

Dr. Sarah started Austin Community Wellness in a small shared space with a group of other related small businesses that moved to a larger shared space within the first 5 months. Shane joined Austin Community Wellness after the move because the new building had space for him to work in as well, but the owner of the larger facility added too many similar practitioners to the building leaving no room for any one of them to grow. At the 2 year mark of business for Austin Community Wellness, the building was so overcrowded that the patients started to complain about the noise levels in the building at all times, the lack of parking and Dr. Sarah and Shane were having difficulty booking



space to see their patients due to rooms not being available. They had to find the perfect location to move to yet again because they simply outgrew the space. Since patient satisfaction is the number one priority, Austin Community Wellness decided to go solo, and they moved into a smaller location that consisted of just Dr. Sarah and Shane. They didn't realize it at the time but moving to a new location boosted the business significantly because they were no longer competing with multiple other practitioners on Google Maps for who would pop up first at the same address. They were now popping up as their own entity for the location.

Do you have any employees?

Austin Community Wellness has 1 employee in addition to Dr. Sarah and Shane who runs the front desk part time. They are looking to make this a full-time position soon as they get them fully trained for all the office tasks.

What's your schedule like, what's a typical day for you?

Austin Community Wellness sees patients 3 afternoons/nights a week and 3 mornings/afternoons a week to cater to those who need before work, lunch and after work appointments.



They are open M-F seeing patients 27 hours a week with Thursdays open to patients mornings/ afternoons & nights. The other hours of the week are spent creating educational videos, brainstorming on future marketing projects and discussing growth opportunities.

What's the best thing about being self-employed?

Dr. Sarah simply loves being a boss woman. She loves to empower people and grow to heights that you cannot achieve while working for somebody else. Shane loves creating new treatments and quite frankly treating people the way he wants to with techniques that he has created. He can do so much more in a clinical setting than a spa treatment. There is true power, honor and pride in building something from an idea, seeding it and watching that grow into something that is real and sustainable, and being able to build that with your life partner is incredible.

What's the best compliment you've ever received from a client?

The best compliments that we get from our patients are the referrals they send our way. Sure, we get the "oooohhssss" and "aaawwwweesss" on a daily basis, but when those people tell others to come and see us, that means that they went out of their way to make sure somebody else knew there is help out there for them. It is such an honor to know that we are that little something that is impacting somebody else's life.

What's the most important piece of advice you would give to someone starting their own business?

Don't give up. If owning a business were easy, everyone would be doing it. There are times that business is so slow, you're going to think that it will never go up again, and there are times when business is so good that you never think it will go back down. Make sure you are always prepared for both scenarios financially and emotionally.



SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHES

RESTAURANT REVITALIZATION FUND

The American Rescue Plan Act established the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) to provide funding to help restaurants and other eligible businesses keep their doors open. This program will provide restaurants with funding equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss up to \$10 million per business and no more than \$5 million per physical location. Recipients are not required to repay the funding as long as funds are used for eligible uses no later than March 11, 2023.

PRIORITY GROUP ACCESS

For the first, 21 days of the program, only priority groups will have access to the Fund, this includes: small business owned by women, veterans, or socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

WHO CAN APPLY?

- Restaurants
- Food stands, food trucks, food carts
- Caterers
- Bars, saloons, lounges, taverns
- Snack and nonalcoholic beverage bars
- Bakeries (onsite sales to the public comprise at least 33% of gross receipts)
- Brewpubs, tasting rooms, taprooms (onsite sales to the public comprise at least 33% of gross receipts)
- Breweries and/or microbreweries (onsite sales to the public comprise at least 33% of gross receipts)

- Wineries and distilleries (onsite sales to the public comprise at least 33% of gross receipts)
- Inns (onsite sales of food and beverage to the public comprise at least 33% of gross receipts)
- Licensed facilities or premises of a beverage alcohol producer where the public may taste, sample, or purchase products

ALLOWABLE USES OF FUNDS

- Business payroll costs (including sick leave)
- Payments on any business mortgage obligation
- Business rent payments (note: this does not include prepayment of rent)
- Business debt service (both principal and interest; note: this does not include any prepayment of principal or interest)
- Business utility payments
- Business maintenance expenses
- Construction of outdoor seating
- Business supplies (including protective equipment and cleaning materials)
- Business food and beverage expenses (including raw materials)
- Covered supplier costs
- Business operating expenses

HOW TO APPLY?

Please visit the following [link](#) to learn more about submitting your application. ■

Katie Vlietstra is NASE's Vice President for Government Relations and Public Affairs; You can contact her at kvlietstra@nase.org.