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Tamara Keefe

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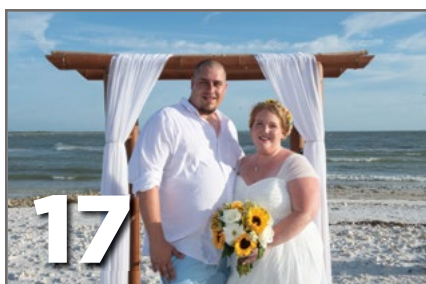
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Cover photo by David Baugher.



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ASK SCORE:

Using 'Google My Business' during COVID-19

Mark Klipsch of the St. Louis Bi-State region of SCORE offers these tips to help small businesses keep open lines of communication with customers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regardless of the industry, businesses find the current uncertain times to be demanding. During these times of crisis, customers expect continuous and clear communication on how COVID-19 is affecting your brand and the measures you have taken to minimize the risk.

A new McKinsey Global Survey reveals that COVID-19 has accelerated digital adoption by several years, and this trend is here to stay. Consumers increasingly have moved to online channels to find businesses and make purchase decisions.

Customers also have taken to Google to find what's changed with their favorite businesses. To be more specific, they are referring to Google My Business profiles for up-to-date information about the status of local businesses.

To engage and retain your customers, it makes sense to update and optimize your Google My Business listing. Doing so will help keep your customers aware of your current hours of operation, temporary closures, operations changes (such as "takeaway only" for restaurants) and proactive measures to ensure their safety.

As businesses navigate through temporary store closures, special hours to minimize the risk of spreading infection and remote working, they also need to prioritize exceptional customer service. Google My Business offers several features that empower businesses to stay connected and update their audiences with vital information.

Among the GMB sections that businesses can use:

- Business name
- Temporarily closed and business hours
- Contact number
- Website links
- More hours
- Support links
- Attributes
- Description
- Category
- Questions and answers (is back!)
- Google posts
- Events

So, let's see how you can use GMB to stay competitive during these challenging times.

Update your business description

Your business description differentiates you from your competition and informs customers about your business — its mission and history, and the services and products it offers. This 750-character business summary needn't remain constant. In fact, during the COVID-19 era, this section should speak to customers about the pandemic and the ensuing changes in business operations.

Make sure your business description shares information, such as whether your business is operating only for takeout or delivery, providing extra services to the community or delaying services.

Mention how your business has been affected by the pandemic and share information about the precautionary measures you're taking to ensure the safety of your customers. This is also a great opportunity to talk about the new services you are offering and the delivery options available to the customers.

Create a COVID-19 post

Businesses are increasingly sharing COVID-19 posts to quickly connect with customers and generate traffic from shoppers. If you haven't used this feature yet, it's time to do so.

Google allows you to share details related to business hours, changes in regular services, safety precautions, out-of-stock or in-stock announcements, and other updates on your business profile. Such COVID-19-related posts will be pinned to the top of your GMB listing, making it easier for customers to see the updates.

Also, create a coronavirus-impact page on your website and add a link in your GMB listing. This page should mention the following:

- How COVID-19 changed your business, the changes you made to overcome challenges and how those changes will affect the customer
- Locations that are closed
- How customers can help
- Availability of gift cards or announcements of special promotions or discounts to encourage customers to buy
- Relief or charitable efforts with which your business is participating.

It's critical to share how you are handling things with your employees. For instance, a remote-working company can share details about the measures they are taking to keep their remote team safe and healthy.

Follow these steps to post an announcement related to COVID-19.

1. Sign in to Google My Business.
2. From the menu, click on Posts.
3. Now, choose the 'COVID-19 update.'

Fill in all necessary fields (hours of operation, changes, updates and requests for support) and preview your post before publishing it.

Mark your business 'Temporarily Closed'

The pandemic forced many businesses to shut operations, offices and outlets at the request of the government and to stop the spread of the pandemic. A majority of organizations have shown their remote readiness by encouraging their employees to work from home.

To indicate if a business has closed doors, Google introduced the 'Temporarily Closed' label to indicate its status from its Google dashboard. As Google's Danny Sullivan confirmed, marking yourself 'Temporarily Closed' will not harm rankings or visibility.

Remember to check your GMB listing daily

Uncertain times call for real-time response, and Google changes GMB events, rules and best practices daily.

For instance, Google is using government information to auto-label listings as closed. In such a case, if your business is open, you need to connect to your GMB dashboard in the 'Info' section and click on 'Mark as opened.'

Remember to check your listing regularly to stay on top of such updates.

Everyone from small businesses to large corporations has been affected by COVID-19. They have had to quickly adapt to changing customer preferences and habits in real time. Because customers increasingly use Google to stay updated on their favorite brands, it's important to optimize your GMB listing to clearly communicate your status and effectively navigate COVID-19.

Since 1964, SCORE "Mentors to America's Small Business" have helped more than 11 million aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners through mentoring and business workshops. More than 10,000 volunteer business mentors in more than 250 chapters serve their communities through entrepreneur education dedicated to the formation, growth and success of small businesses. For more information about starting or operating a small business, call 1-800-634-0245 for the SCORE chapter nearest you. Visit SCORE at www.score.org.

You should know . . .

How to start (or clean up) your LLC



By Chris Brown

Editor's note: In this new column, Missouri lawyer-entrepreneur Chris Brown shares useful legal information for startup founders and owners of small businesses.

Starting a business is exciting, but it is often a confusing process for entrepreneurs. One of the first things you will do is create an LLC (or a corporation in certain situations).

In this article, we'll explain some of the things you should consider when creating your LLC. And if you've already created your LLC, you can use these tips to make sure your LLC is set up properly.

Incorporating with the Secretary of State

One of the best benefits of creating an LLC is the limited liability it can provide for owners. The only way to obtain that benefit, however, is by filing the proper documents with your state's Secretary of State. While regulations of each state are different, they usually require you to file Articles of Organization (or a similar document) that includes your LLC name, the purpose of the company, a registered agent (in short, the person who can receive lawsuits on

behalf of the company) and the name of the person submitting the filing.

In Missouri, this is a very simple filing that can be made online for \$50. This process is simple, but it is often best to talk to an attorney about the filing to make sure you don't make a mistake. After you file, you will receive a file-stamped copy of your Articles of Organization.

Drafting an operating agreement

All LLCs should have an operating agreement. For single-owner LLCs, this may include only a few pages. For multi-owner LLCs, it usually will be 10-20 pages.

The operating agreement is essentially the rules that will govern the company and its owners. It should cover topics such as voting rights of the members, day-to-day management rights, economic rights, confidentiality obligations, restrictions on owning competing businesses and limitations on the ability to sell your ownership interest.

Getting an EIN

You also should obtain an Employer Identification Number ("EIN") for your LLC. This is a unique number assigned to you by the IRS, and it will be important to obtain even if you don't hire employees. You'll use it with various government entities, banks and other third parties.

In most cases, you can obtain this online from the IRS. Sometimes you can get the official letter online. Other times, it will give you the number online but mail a hard-copy letter to you as confirmation.

Opening a bank account

If you've made it this far, then you likely will have everything you need to open a business bank account. Simply print all of the documents referenced above and take them to your bank.

When choosing a bank, make sure you research how the bank operates. If cloud-based

tools are important to you, then review the bank's digital infrastructure. If you use a specific accounting program, then make sure the bank syncs with your program of choice. Also consider what future needs you might have from your bank — loans, for example — and make sure you select a bank that can help you to grow your business.

Keeping the LLC separate from you

After doing all of this, it is critical that you take ongoing steps to keep your LLC separate from you, the owner. This means actively using the business bank account (and not your personal account), signing contracts for the LLC (and not under your name), filing annual reports required by your state, and properly documenting company meetings and decisions that must be approved in writing pursuant to your operating agreement (for example, approval for an owner to sell his or her ownership interest).

Best practices

Entrepreneurs often try to do everything on their own. While some of these things are easy from a practical view, they are also easy to mess up. And worse, when you make a mistake on these formation items, you may not learn about it until months or years later. For that reason, it's often best to work with a business attorney to help you set up your LLC the right way.

This article is very general in nature and does not constitute legal advice. Readers with legal questions should consult with an attorney prior to making any legal decisions.

Chris Brown represents startups, freelancers and small businesses through his law firm, Venture Legal, in Kansas City. He also co-founded Contract Canvas, a digital contract platform for creative professionals. You can find him on Twitter @CSBCounsel.

My Biggest Mistake

By Eric Berger

About three years ago, Dan Schaefer decided that — like humans with their own snacks — pet owners might want to be able to recognize the ingredients in their dogs' supplements, too.

So he and longtime friend and fellow St. Louisan Pat Barron launched a company, Native Pet, with a mission to “make pet food simpler and with a cleaner label.”

People bit on their idea.

“I think the message really resonates with people. As consumers, we are looking [to understand] the things that we put in our bodies, and it’s a natural extension into how you are feeding your pet,” said Barron, 32.

The startup now does a couple million dollars annually in sales, all of it online. And that number grew more rapidly during the pandemic, as so many people decided to bring home new animal friends that shelters and breeders no longer had enough puppies to fill the demand.

The startup, headquartered in downtown St. Louis, also recently received a \$50,000 grant and access to mentors and resources as a winner of the annual Arch Grants startup competition, which is based in St. Louis. The company is preparing to launch its goods this year on the



PAT BARRON, LEFT, AND DAN SCHAEFER. PHOTOS COURTESY OF NATIVE PET.

online pet product retailer Chewy.com and in brick-and-mortar stores.

In spite of their success, like a puppy on new carpeting, they have made mistakes. Their biggest one occurred in 2019 when they started working on a supplement in treat form — an air-dried chew, aimed at helping older dogs with mobility issues.

While they had a vision, Barron said, they didn’t set a clear agenda with the manufacturer as to what they were looking for in research and development. Instead, they let the other company lead the process.

“Our goals for the product were different than their goals for the product, and so we went into trial and were using some of their plan and some of our plan, and what ended up happening because of that was, there wasn’t a plan,” Barron said.

Like the plan, the chew just fell apart.

“What would have happened if we went

with that product is it would have arrived” at a customer’s home “and just been a bag of powder and dust,” Barron said.

After three months of R&D, they were back at day one. The company hired a different manufacturer.

“We went in with a plan and executed on it pretty quickly because we had that experience of nobody knowing what’s going on, so we were very clear about what we wanted to accomplish and how we were going to do it,” Barron said.

Barron and Schaefer now are happy with the composition of the chew and are preparing to start selling it this month.

For the founders, the takeaway was this: “If you are not upfront with how you want to run the process and hitting the different milestones, then really you are just going to be pushed to the side or you’re not going to get exactly what you are asking for,” Barron said.



My BIGGEST MISTAKE:

“I think our biggest mistake would be not doing the upfront work with new products and product development, and what I mean by that is really developing the plan and timeline and sticking to that.”

— Pat Barron

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DIRECT E-MAIL

Reach the right people at the right time.

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Contact Johnny Aguirre at 314-558-3257 or jaguirre@molawyersmedia.com for more information.

By The Numbers: Small business outlook for 2021?

30.2M

small businesses in the U.S.

59M

people employed by
those small businesses

47.5%

of U.S. workforce is employed by
small businesses

Source: U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA.gov) and U.S. Census Bureau

Missouri unemployment rate

10.2%

April 2020

7.8%

June 2020

4.4%

December 2020

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Reasons for optimism?

Despite the often-devastating impact of COVID-19 on small businesses through 2020, recent surveys suggest that owners of those businesses are hopeful that conditions will improve in 2021:

64%
of small business
owners say
their businesses
performed worse in
2020 than in 2019.

83% of small business owners say they believe their enterprises will perform better in 2021 than they did in 2020.

93% say they plan to hire this year (compared to 45% that shed employees through layoffs in 2020).

75% plan to spend more on business-boosting technology and software in 2021 than in 2020.

75% called on the government to provide more assistance for small businesses in the form of emergency grants, long-term grants and rent relief.

Source: GGV Capital Impact Report: What COVID-19 Means for Small Business in 2021, released by GGV Capital and Hello Alice, a multichannel platform that guides business owners and tracks data and trends for entrepreneurs

Still, business owners say more government aid is imperative

75% of U.S. small business owners remain concerned for their business's finances.

72% remain concerned for their business's future.

70% say they'll need more federal aid to stay afloat in 2021.

83% of minority-owned small businesses say they will need more federal aid in 2021.

56% of small business owners believe it will take 6 to 12 months for the small business climate to return to normal.

50% say they can continue operating for only a year or less under current conditions.

Optimists vs. pessimists

- 67%** of U.S. small business owners say they have a business plan to adapt and change their business if they start to struggle.
- 52%** say they anticipate revenue increases one year from now.
- 50%** believe the health of the U.S. economy is poor (down from 56% in September 2020 and 66% in April 2020).
- 22%** say the U.S. economy is in "somewhat good health" (up from 15% in Q3 of 2020).
- 44%** say the worst of the pandemic is over.
- 40%** believe their business can continue to operate indefinitely without having to shut down permanently (up from 28% in late March 2020).

Regional attitudes

- The pessimists: Only **36%** of small business owners in Western states believe the worst effects of the pandemic are behind them.
- The optimists: **50%** of small business owners in the South believe that the worst has passed ...
- followed by **44%** in the Midwest ...
- and **40%** in the Northeast.

Source: Q4 Small Business Index report released in late December by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and MetLife.

Top 4 small business trends for 2021:

1. E-commerce will keep expanding after growing 20% in 2020. Small businesses need mobile-friendly websites to accommodate this shift in customer preferences.
2. Alternative payment options — mobile pay, online pay with curbside pickup or contactless credit-debit payments — will remain in demand after increasing by 69% in 2020.
3. Remote work will continue, requiring technology and software to keep employees connected. 75% of business owners expect to increase spending in this area in 2021.
4. Businesses offering virtual services in tech and cybersecurity, food delivery, home improvement, and health and fitness options will remain in high demand.

Source: U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA.gov) and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

What Do You Mean, I Don't Own My Website?

*By Jonathan Soifer, Shareholder,
Sandberg Phoenix*

It happens all the time. A company hires a web developer to design its website. Time passes, and the company decides it's time to make changes to the website. When the company asks the developer for the files related to the website, the developer says that he owns the copyright, and that he won't give the company the files without additional payment. Similar stories happen with artwork for packaging or photographs for catalogs. When they try to enforce what they think is theirs and stop others from copying their artwork or photographs, they find they don't own the copyrights. The company, which has paid for the website or artwork or photographs only has one question - how can this be? I paid for the website design, artwork, photoshoot, etc. How can I not own the copyright?

The question as to who owns copyrights starts with the US Constitution. Art. I, Sec. 8 of the Constitution empowers Congress to "[secure] for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries". The Constitutional

directive is carried out in our copyright laws which provide that copyrights are owned by the author. (17 USC §201(a)). However, if the work is a "work made for hire", "the employer or other person for whom the work was prepared is considered the author" (17 USC §201(b)) and thus the owner of the copyright.

Aha, our company says - my web designer, artist, photographer prepared the work for the company, so the website, artwork, photographs, etc. are works made for hire, even though the web designer, artist, photographer was an independent contractor. Unfortunately, it is not that easy. There are only two situations in which a work is a work made for hire. The first is when the work is made by an employee. The second is when it is a specific type of work, as set forth in the Copyright Act and the parties expressly agree that the work is to be a work made for hire." (17 USC §101 - Definition of "Work Made For Hire").

In this situation, the work (a web site, product artwork, or photograph) is not one of the enumerated special types of work. Thus, for the work to be a "work made for hire", the independent contractor

would need to be considered an employee of the company. In the seminal case of *Community for Non-Violence v. Reid*, 490 U.S. 730 (1989) the Supreme Court considered this question in the context of a sculptor who was hired to prepare a sculpture. The Supreme Court set forth a list of factors which can be considered when determining if the contractor is an employee of the hiring company. These factors include:

1. The hiring party's right to control the manner and means by which the product is accomplished.
2. the skill required to prepare the work
3. the source of the instrumentalities and tools for the independent contractor
4. the location of the work (i.e., where did the independent contractor produce the work)
5. the duration of the relationship between the parties;
6. whether the hiring party has the right to assign additional projects to the hired party;
7. the extent of the hired party's discretion over when and how long to work;

8. the method of payment;
9. the hired party's role in hiring and paying assistants;
10. whether the work is part of the regular business of the hiring party;
11. whether the hiring party is in business;
12. the provision of employee benefits; and
13. the tax treatment of the hired party.

In that case, the Supreme Court determined that the sculptor was the owner of the copyright in the sculpture even though he had been paid to produce the work.

The reality is that rarely will an independent contractor be considered an employee of the hiring company. In fact, most agreements with independent contractors make clear that the independent contractor is not an employee. Thus, it will be the rare occasion that work done by one who is not an employee is determined to be a work made for hire.

So then, if the work is not a work made for hire, how does the company protect itself? The answer is that this will be accomplished through the agreement between the company and the author. Prior to hiring the independent contractor, the company will need to ensure that the agreement between the company and the author

gives the company the rights it needs. It is not enough to say that the work is a work made for hire. The courts will look through that. Rather, for the company to be the owner of the copyrights in the work, the agreement will need to set out in writing that the independent contractor is transferring the rights in the particular work to the company. (17 USC §201(a)). If the company does not need full ownership of the copyrights, then the company will to ensure that the rights

it does need (such as to make modifications to the work) are built into the agreement.

In conclusion, if and when you hire an independent contractor to design a website, prepare product artwork, coordinate a photoshoot for a catalog, or even make a logo, carefully review your agreement, or have your lawyer review the agreement, to ensure that you are getting the rights you need and you fully understand the terms of the contract.



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IN FIVE YEARS, TAMARA KEEFE'S CLEMENTINE'S NAUGHTY AND NICE CREAMERY HAS EXPANDED FROM A SINGLE STOREFRONT TO FOUR ST. LOUIS LOCATIONS. PHOTOS BY DAVID BAUGHER

Profits by the pint

Entrepreneur Tamara Keefe fled a successful corporate career to make ice cream. Four shops later, her “Naughty and Nice” flavors have won over fans in St. Louis and beyond — and even Oprah.

By David Baugher

Before hitting her 40th birthday, Tamara Keefe had reached a vocational level that some spend their entire lives trying to attain. A successful executive at Abbott Laboratories' Ensure brand, the Drucker School of Management MBA grad was marketing a \$70 million business and had spent 262 days on the road in 2012.

Despite her victories ascending the corporate ladder, she had one problem:

“I was not living my life for me,” she recalled.

“I was living it for someone else.”

Fortunately for her, she didn't have to trade in her success for a shot at something more satisfying. Now, as the owner of Clementine's Naughty and Nice Creamery, she's found a way to put a lifetime of skills honed in the boardroom to work at her own self-funded startup.

Her business takes advantage of her love for making ice cream, a hobby the Southern California native discovered as a kid after her mother bought some secondhand, hand-crank dairy equipment for \$2 at a yard sale.

The name for the business came from a friend of her grandmother with impressively long, silver hair.

“I just thought she was the most beautiful, elegant creature, and I just loved her so much,” said Keefe, 45. “I grew up saying, ‘Someday I'm going to have a little girl, and I'm going to name her Clementine.’”

Instead, the moniker went to her business.

“It's kind of my baby, so it just worked out perfectly,” she said.

So has the creamery, which took only five years to expand from its initial storefront in

the Lafayette Square neighborhood of St. Louis to include four locations from Clayton to Lake St. Louis. With eclectic offerings ranging from persimmon cardamom to black tahini, the establishment has earned accolades far outside the Gateway City — even picking up the coveted imprimatur of Oprah Magazine as “Sexiest Ice Cream” on its 2019 “O List.”

Keefe, who also has been profiled in Forbes, was recently recognized with a coveted spot in the prestigious James Beard Foundation’s Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership Program. Now in its fourth year, the Beard program supports woman-identifying hospitality industry entrepreneurs, restaurant owners and chefs as they grow their careers and scale their businesses. Keefe was one of 25 fellows chosen from among restaurant owners, winemakers and chefs who have won regional and national acclaim.

Keefe also is a 2018 alumna of the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses program. In 2019, she was one of 50 women business owners chosen for the Tory Burch Fellows program, which provides early-stage entrepreneurs with a year-long fellowship, a \$5,000 grant for business education and mentorship through its peer network.

Last year, her St. Louis-themed gooey butter cake variety won top honors for the country’s best new flavor, according to the National Ice Cream Retailers Association.

“I think her willingness to say, ‘This is the plan, this is what I’m going to do to get there’ is pretty extraordinary,” said Stephen Christensen, the group’s executive director.

Christensen, who first met Keefe while teaching an ice cream program at Penn State University, also runs Scoop School, a Chesterfield Valley-based business in suburban

St. Louis that educates in the art of frozen delicacies. Keefe’s unique knowledge of marketing, product creation and operations is what makes her so impressive, Christensen said. He also admits to a fondness for her salted cracker caramel flavor.

“She actually sends all her managers to our classes, which shows a bit more dedication than most would,” he said.

One of Keefe’s biggest innovations at Clementine’s Naughty and Nice Creamery has been on the naughty side of the ledger. The hundreds of flavors she’s brought to life include various “boozy” ice creams — alcohol-infused products that include maple bourbon, chocolate cabernet and a banana rum offering. A Schlafly cider sorbet uses the iconic local craft brewer’s apple pie cider.

“It was something I had thought about that a customer actually

pushed me to do,” she said of the idea of adding alcohol to her frozen treats. “I have a pretty extensive food science background, and I have access to the best food scientists and developers in the world because I worked in the food industry, so I had access to technologies and things that most people don’t. It was a matter of getting the right team together to see if something could work.”

Something did work. Now patrons of drinking age can sample flavors that encompass everything from pink champagne to tequila.

“Putting innovation into something that has been pretty much a stagnant category has been kind of a game-changer for us and the industry,” she said, noting that ice cream hasn’t had many innovations since the introduction of Dippin’ Dots in 1988. “Rum raisin has been around for 100 years. Everyone soaks their raisins in rum, but to do a super-boozy ice cream, we were the first ones nationally who did that.”

Of course, the path to success entailed a few risks. Keefe decided on a strategy that

PROFITS continued on 14



included neither debt nor investors. She proceeded to cash out her 401k while sinking her life savings into the new venture, which was drawn up in a business plan mapped out during the course of a weekend.

"I made the biggest bet of my life and put it on myself," she said.

That wager paid off, but it wasn't without its difficult moments.

"About six months in, I ran out of money and I do not come from a wealthy family, so I didn't have anyone to go to," she said. "I was a new business with a new concept, so no bank was going to give me any money. I couldn't get any money from the [U.S. Small Business Administration]. That was a really challenging time for me."

Rather than open a physical location immediately, she started to build her brand by introducing her product to local hotels and on restaurant menus. It worked. Customers flocked to the shop when her wholesale business shifted gears and she opened a storefront to the public.

Of course, success created a new problem as the lines grew.

"Then it was a matter of, 'OK, how do we look at the business and what changes do we make operationally and physically in the stores to make the service go faster while maintaining the integrity of the experience and the quality of the ice cream?'"

That meant changing the store's layout.

"We invested in better equipment and registers, [point of sale] systems and online support setting up an online store and doing delivery," she said.

Keefe said each shop offers about two dozen flavors, with eight of them being "naughty." Freezers offer another 40 to 50 different varieties packed in pints, which have become a significantly more popular option during the COVID-19 pandemic.

She noted that her corporate background came in handy.

"I think one key to our success was the fact that I ran big businesses," she said. "I ran a [profit and loss]. I understand financial statements and documentation. I also happen to work in the food industry, so I understood food safety and being in manufacturing facilities and what does that look like? How do you build it? What does traceability look like?"

For many, the romantic concept of simply having a dream and the will to succeed doesn't always pan out, Keefe said.

"There is a lot involved in running a business. It is not just, 'I have an idea. Let's make this thing,'" she said. "It is production. It is manufacturing. It is planning. It is retail



CLEMENTINE'S MANY FLAVORS INCLUDE ALCOHOL-INFUSED "NAUGHTY" OPTIONS. PHOTO BY DAVID BAUGHER

and store operations, negotiations, real estate, accounts payable and receivable. I think that is something people don't think about when they start a business. They have a good idea, and then suddenly they think, 'Oh, wait, I don't know how to do this'."

Entrepreneurship isn't for everyone, she noted. The risks and sacrifices can be difficult.

"There are amazing rewards, too. You are your own boss," said Keefe. "But at the end of the day, guess what? Everyone gets paid before you do."

Still, her future looks bright. Clementine's is set to pick up a fifth location in Town and Country soon. She opens about one shop per year to keep quality high and growth manageable prior to scaling to a more far-flung operation. She looks ahead to a national launch after establishing 10 to 12 stores in the St. Louis region.

That's a more conservative vision than her original plan to branch out to other regions after just four or five shops.

"We would rather expand into the market completely," she said. "This year, it is a lot easier to manage. Then, when we are a lot bigger, depending on where we are at in terms of resources and time and people, we'll be able to handle it much more effectively in other cities."

She hopes that what she's learned from the Beard program can assist her as Clementine's expands.

"They are really teaching us about being better owners, ways to cope with stress," she said. "It helped us put together a growth plan moving forward. They've been foundationally helpful with us females in the culinary space because there are not that many of them."

In the meantime, Keefe plans to keep making her mark on the area and the industry — an

impact others continue to notice.

"I always remember talking with her because the moment she walked away, I was like, absolutely we would like to be partners with Tamara and what she was going to do at Clementine's," said Eddie Cajina, a senior sales and marketing executive with Meadowvale, the Illinois company that makes the proprietary base mix used by Keefe. "She knew what she wanted, and it was different than what was out there."

Cajina lauded Keefe for more than just her business acumen.

"For me, the key thing that Tamara has is that she's a good person," he said. "She wants to do good through the experiences that she's providing to her guests, and in addition to that, the partnerships that she looks for and all the things she's doing. It really makes her very special."

That's still an important part of the equation for Keefe, who opened her first shop in her own neighborhood and still brands herself as "St. Louis-proud."

"We're a homegrown brand," she said. "We wouldn't be where we are today if it wasn't for the city being so supportive of us."

That's part of why she left her previous corporate life despite the uncertainty of a new beginning.

"When you start something new, nothing is ever easy," she said. "It is always challenging, but at least I'm making a difference in the community that I serve. I make a difference for the people that I employ and for whom I provide livelihoods. And I own my own life now. I own my own destiny. And I love that I make people happy every single day."

'A critical mass of companies'

Arch Grants sets aside funding for geospatial technology startups, aiming to complement the work of the new National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency complex in St. Louis

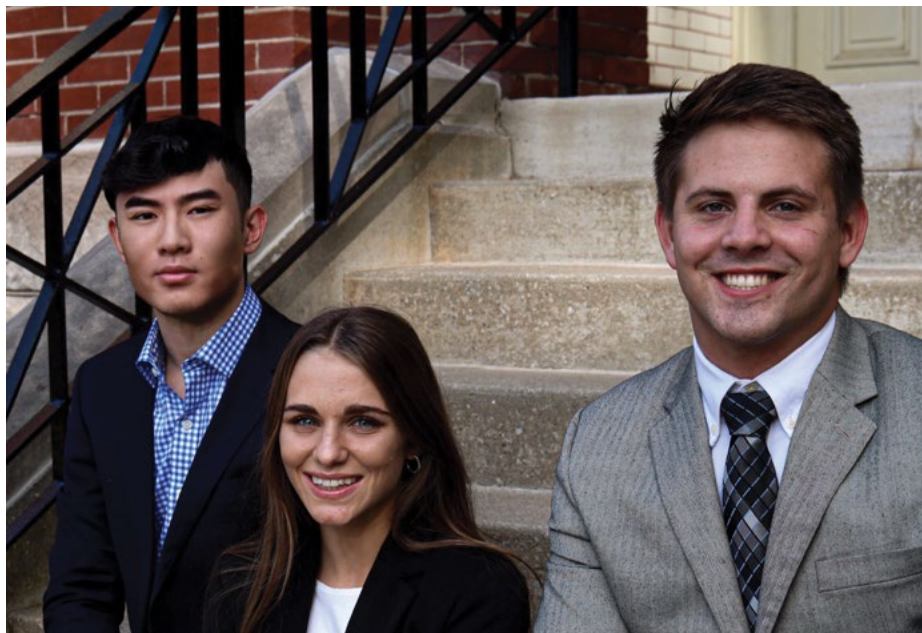
By Eric Berger

Since launching Stratodyne in July 2020, Ed Ge and his co-founders have focused on what farmers would be interested to see from the vantage points of their startup's autonomous balloons.

But Ge, a junior at the University of Missouri in Columbia, is also thinking about how the technology could be useful for gathering information on things other than soil quality and crop disease.

"There is a huge need for real-time geospatial analytics, real-time data, in the defense and national security space. So essentially, we could go from predicting and analyzing plant growth to doing the same thing with infrastructure and strategic assets," said Ge, 21.

That sort of aspiration is what leaders of the St. Louis-based startup competition Arch Grants



STRATODYNE CO-FOUNDERS ED GE, VICTORIA LOFLAND AND BRYCE EDMONDSON, FROM LEFT. PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARCH GRANTS

had in mind when the organization decided in 2019 to begin awarding at least five of its grants to geospatial companies each year.

The nonprofit organization provides \$50,000 grants to startups that agree to keep their headquarters in St. Louis for at least one year. It zeroed in on that sector because the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is building its western headquarters — a \$1.75 billion project — in north St. Louis.

"Our whole mission at Arch Grants is to spur the local economy by way of entrepreneurs and innovative startups, so we look for complementary sectors and growing assets in a region and try to target specific companies that can leverage those assets in their growth," said Gabe Angieri, Arch Grants director of development and operations.

"Making sure that we have a critical mass of companies in the geospatial sector became a high priority for us," Angieri said.

The 2020 Arch Grants cohort, announced in October, consists of 19 companies, five of which operate in the geospatial tech sector. Along with Stratodyne, those companies are:

- Eemerg, a membership-free roadside assistance service
- Hum Industrial Technology, which has developed a wireless-sensor system for freight railcars
- Kwema, which sells wearables to companies to try to improve employee safety
- NEER, which provides artificial intelligence for water systems.

The other 2020 Arch Grants recipients are:

- 3D Gloop!, which creates adhesives and

coatings for manufacturing and 3D printing

- ATR Thrive, which offers supplements to assist complete digestion of milk products
- Bloom, which creates customizable beauty products
- Bold Xchange, a platform to buy products from Black-owned businesses online
- Disruptel, an artificial intelligence-technology provider
- Flipstik, an accessory that allows you to stick your phone to virtually any flat surface
- Inclusively, an employment platform for people with disabilities
- Labsland, which connects schools and universities with laboratories around the world
- Mission Control, a software platform that enables organizations to build community through recreational e-sports
- Mosaic, which aggregates electronic medical record data
- Native Pet, which offers organic supplements for dogs (*See "My Biggest Mistake," page 6*)
- Rebundle, which sells eco-friendly synthetic braiding hair
- ServiceTarget, a self-service application developer
- Well Principled, an artificial intelligence consultant that optimizes marketing and supply chain strategy for major consumer packaged-goods brands and retailers.

Geospatial technology refers to the monitoring of activity around the planet using satellites, balloons, drones, remote sensors and other machines. The field also relies on



ELANGO THEVAR, FOUNDER OF NEER TECHNOLOGIES

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geographic information systems for capturing and displaying data from the Earth's surface, and in the United States, on software connected to the Global Positioning System, a network of satellites operated by the Department of Defense, which also oversees the NGA.

The federal agency's new 97-acre campus, labeled Next NGA West, will feature an office building with more than 700,000 square feet of space, parking garages, a visitor's center and areas for collaboration with the academic and business sectors. The complex is scheduled to be operating by 2025.

"The new campus will be a secure, flexible, cutting-edge intelligence facility that will put NGA in the heart of St. Louis' growing geospatial ecosystem and help NGA take advantage of its biggest strengths, its people and partners," said NGA Director Vice Admiral Robert Sharp in a statement when the agency broke ground for the campus in November 2019.

"NGA's new campus will be built with spaces that will facilitate information-sharing and collaboration among NGA's and St. Louis' talented innovators," Sharp said. "Working together, we can better achieve NGA's mission of providing world-class geospatial intelligence to U.S. service members and leaders to keep our nation secure."

Angieri predicts startups in the region will benefit from the new campus because more investors will come to St. Louis to look for geospatial business opportunities. The startups also could partner with the federal agency or larger companies such as Esri, a mapping-software company that in 2019 announced it would expand its office in St. Charles and add 40 jobs.

The new NGA project "is a great way to help build another industry cluster in St. Louis" alongside such sectors as agricultural technology, which already has a significant local presence, Angieri said.

Ge founded Stratodyne along with two fellow Mizzou undergraduates and a University of Michigan student. He spent the summer of 2018 working on a farm in Nebraska, and he realized that amidst the thousands of acres of arable land, "it's almost impossible for a farmer to know what's going on all the time," he said.

"It's really common for stuff to happen and for the farmer to lose hundreds of crops by the time he figures it out," he said.

Using Stratodyne's autonomous balloons, farms can monitor application of fertilizer and the chlorophyll index of plants, among other metrics.

Stratodyne also has applied to participate in the NGA's inaugural St. Louis Geospatial Technology Accelerator, which provides a



WHITNEY MCCLENDON-GREGORY OF EEMERG

\$100,000 grant, coworking space and investor connections. That's part of the company's pivot into the defense and surveillance space.

"We are working to reduce the timing between imaging from weeks to minutes . . . Not a lot can change on the farm between one day and the next, but a lot can change on the battlefield or in a conflict zone every single hour," Ge said.

Akin to farmers with their crops, municipalities also have difficulties in monitoring pipes and other parts of water systems, said civil engineer Elango Thevar. He founded NEER, a platform that uses machine-learning technology to predict where and when the next failure could occur.

As an Arch Grants recipient, Thevar was able to move his company from Kansas City to the new Geospatial Innovation Center at the T-REX building in downtown St. Louis. The five geospatial startups receive one year of complementary office space as part of their Arch Grants awards.

Thevar said he believes local public and private officials' emphasis on the geospatial industry "definitely helps to attract the talent that we want to hire."

He is discussing a pilot program with the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District, and he sees a bevy of local mentoring and financial resources for companies in the industry "to help us scale in St. Louis at a tremendous value," he said.

The ripple effects of the new NGA headquarters also have reached Saint Louis University, which in 2019 launched the Geospatial Institute, a center that provides research tools to spur innovation in the industry.

Whitney McClendon-Gregory, the founder of the Eemerg roadside assistance startup, has attended meetings organized by the institute to learn about the latest developments in

geospatial technology, such as the ability to geolocate people infected with COVID-19 and identify hotspots.

"It's just really informative to know how this technology is benefiting us — how it can help us," said McClendon-Gregory, whose parents work in roadside assistance and whose uncle owns an auto body shop.

Her startup created an app that uses geolocation to pinpoint a driver who is stuck on the side of a road. That person can then view a marketplace of roadside assistance options and "pick the one that works best for your budget," she said. Eemerg then dispatches a tow truck to help.

McClendon-Gregory and most of her family needed a different kind of assistance after they contracted COVID-19 following a Thanksgiving gathering. Two family members landed in the hospital, but they have since returned home.

"It was horrible, but now everyone is on the mend," said McClendon-Gregory, who runs Eemerg with her husband, Dandre, the chief technology officer.

The pandemic not only threw a wrench into McClendon-Gregory's life but also into the operations of other startups and to those of Arch Grants, given that many people are now working from home rather than interacting with other entrepreneurs and business leaders.

"The biggest challenge is not being able to host those in-person events and meetings," Angieri said. "When you meet somebody and are able to engage on a one-on-one level, I think you develop stronger relationships."

Still, as Zoom and other video conferencing platforms have become a routine part of daily life, Arch Grants has been able to engage successful entrepreneurs who otherwise wouldn't have physically attended programs for professional development with its startup founders, Angieri said.

That's not to say that the Arch Grants leaders hope this is the new normal for its recipients, who in pre-pandemic times would have been forging valuable professional and personal connections in the city while developing their companies.

"It's really unfortunate that they can't go out to the fantastic restaurants in St. Louis, that they can't participate in the cultural experiences to the same degree that they were able to before the pandemic," Angieri said.

"But we are hopeful that by the end of this year, the restrictions will loosen and our companies will be able to take full advantage of the resources in our area, and that in the meantime, we are able to demonstrate the value that Arch Grants is able to provide those companies and continue to make those valuable connections in St. Louis."



JOSH HORN, ABOVE LEFT AND FAR RIGHT, CO-FOUNDED PPE EVENTS TO LIVESTREAM GATHERINGS. PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOSH HORN

New ways to gather

For Missourians whose livelihoods are linked to weddings, gatherings and galas, staying afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic has meant adapting or even reinventing their businesses.

By David Baugher

For Becky Brown of Cakes Reanimated, it was every baker's worst nightmare.

"For a couple of days, I couldn't find powdered sugar," the Cape Girardeau cakemaker said, recalling the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic last spring.

The pandemic has triggered shortages of many products since then, but one thing Brown hasn't been short on is customers — which even she finds surprising.

"It was bizarre," she said. "I thought business was really going to suffer, but because we've adapted and started offering different sizes of things, that's really been a huge deal."

For Missourians like Brown whose livelihoods depend on events, adaptation has been the name of the game through the past year. From

venue owners to videographers, everyone is looking for new ways to survive a strange time when the gatherings that once marked the milestones of life now can be harmful to one's health. Along the way, some have altered their business practices, while others have changed their models entirely to suit a new era of social distancing.

Creative solutions and hybrid approaches

"I've kind of avoided indoor situations," said Donald Wesley of FReSh RAiN, a cover band he manages in the St. Louis area.

Wesley said he has known people who died as a result of the pandemic, and he does his best to watch out for himself and his bandmates during gigs in settings ranging from birthday parties to corporate get-togethers.



He recalled one job where the band was supposed to play a set outdoors. On arrival, however, he found an earlier downpour had made the area damp. The owner wanted him to set up the band in a building instead. He refused.

"There were just way too many people not wearing masks inside a small space," he said.

Other performers, too, have found themselves in a quandary as they search for the best ways to protect themselves and their co-workers. For planners of large gatherings, though, it's an even bigger challenge to protect thousands — or even tens of thousands — of potential attendees.

"We've been creative in the fact that we create events for a living," said Keli O'Neill Wenzel.

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KELI O'NEILL WENZEL

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You may not have heard of Wenzel, who sits on the board of the International Festival and Events Association, but if you frequent the Kansas City area, you might have attended some of her work. O'Neill Events & Marketing and its six employees have had a hand in everything from the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl parade to the Royals' World Series celebration. The company typically handles some of the biggest gatherings in the area.

Obviously, some of those had to be cancelled altogether last year in the immediate wake of lockdowns. But autumn events provided a bit more time to make adjustments and get inventive to keep the spirit of the gathering alive while keeping everyone virus-free, Wenzel said.

Kansas City's Irish Festival, which in past years has attracted as many as 80,000 people from 40 states, was a case in point. The September 2020 get-together featured a hybrid approach with virtual whiskey tastings and streaming cooking classes. Participants could use ingredient kits to make scones via Zoom with acclaimed chef Shaun Brady or tune in from home to watch an Irish fiddling workshop and improve their musical skills. There

was even a "Golden Ticket Cow Plop" in which livestreamed participants could watch and win prizes if a bovine evacuated itself on certain numbered squares.

"You could still have some physical elements that made it feel like you're not just watching TV," she said. "One of the things we've learned with a lot of our clients is, let's not make it virtual-only. How can we have elements of physicalness?"

Wenzel also has worked with the city of Leavenworth, Kansas on its Camp Leavenworth event, which was introduced in 2019 as a two-day downtown festival with music, food, drinks and fireworks. In 2020, organizers rebranded the event as "Lovingworth," featuring such happenings as "dinner/date night in your driveway," a sidewalk chalk-art contest and socially distanced yoga.

O'Neill Events & Marketing also is working with nonprofit organizations to help them switch from their traditional ballroom fundraisers to virtual gatherings or hybrids.

New realities, new businesses

While some companies are adapting to the new environment, others literally have been created because of it.

"It is very unique," said Josh Horn, co-owner of PPE Events, a St. Louis-based company that came into existence after he and others were laid off from a DJ/entertainment organization at the beginning of the pandemic.

"At this point, there are only four of us in the entire market that actually run this [kind of] service," he said late last year. "The DJ business really went down very, very quickly."

By July, he and his co-workers founded PPE to livestream events that, in the past, people would have attended themselves. He said the enterprise is now the largest in the region and even donates money from each event it handles to COVID-19-related philanthropic endeavors. Horn said PPE has worked with businesses, schools, charities and youth sports groups.

"Primarily, it is weddings. However, we have done a fair amount of funerals," he said. "Unfortunately, most of them have been COVID-related deaths."

But these days, even virtual events can get too crowded.

"For instance, in a lot of spots in Illinois, you can have [only] 10 people at any event," Horn said late last year. "In a lot of cases, that

includes any kind of event staff. For us to do a full production, typically we have to run a three-person crew."

Horn and his colleagues also have found that masking at such events is often limited and face coverings are often removed during the reception.

"It depends upon the group of people," he noted. "We've been to weddings where it seems like social distancing never was a thing."

The company now is trying to do events with one person on-site and others working electronically. Horn said he recently streamed one wedding to six nations and another to grandparents who were themselves in quarantine.

"They had been exposed to COVID and didn't know if they had it," Horn said. "Without the video, they wouldn't have seen their granddaughter's wedding."

Horn said he hopes to start a trade organization in the St. Louis market, saying he believes that, long after COVID-19 is just a memory, the practice of livestreaming events will be going strong.

"I think it is something that is going to stick around for the long term," he said.

Orders 'through the roof'

Back in Cape Girardeau, Becky Brown has been baking a lot of cakes, even though COVID-19 has entailed some changes.

"It has slowed down in one sense, but in another sense it has sped up and been crazy," said Brown, who opened her storefront in December 2019 and was in business for only a few weeks when the pandemic forced her to close down.

"We don't have walk-ins anymore, but all of my custom orders have been going through the roof," she said. "They've gotten smaller in size, so if we used to have a 20-person party, it would be like six to 12 people."

In response to less-crowded events, Brown began promoting two-layer cake options in addition to her usual three-layer offerings.

"It made things smaller for smaller parties and adapted for the customer's needs," she said.

Her custom orders skyrocketed, and she began having trouble keeping up with the volume. She said she believes her social media and radio advertising campaigns may have helped to grow her business, along with a general rejection of big box stores during the coronavirus era.

"I think people just wanted to stay out of Walmart," she noted.

Brown also offered cookie project kits for Easter in 2020, and she said she may try something similar in the future. She now delivers curbside and wears a mask. She isn't especially concerned with whether customers follow suit, she said, because their interactions take place

"We've been creative in the fact that we create events for a living."

Keli O'Neill Wenzel

in the open air.

"I haven't had anybody get out of their car and try to hug me or anything like that," Brown said. "Sometimes they wear masks. Sometimes they don't. It is just whatever they are comfortable with."

In the southwestern part of the state, Springfield photographer Erin Gamble said she has seen only small events since the lockdowns — frequently with 20 people or less — in a significant switch from the 150- to 300-person weddings she was accustomed to booking.

"I'm starting to have some of those bigger weddings," she noted last fall. "But I'm also still having some couples totally reschedule for [2021]."

For some event vendors, last fall meant a compressed schedule of busy weekends to accommodate multiple ceremonies that were rescheduled after cancelled spring dates. Gamble said about half of her wedding clients cancelled in 2020, which the other half just delayed their events.

"The one thing [I've done] to get by is pushing 2021 and how it's going to be a new year and how hopefully it is a new beginning as well," said Gamble, who has been a full-time photographer for eight years. "Hopefully, there aren't as many restrictions [later this year], and we can go back to life as it was before."

In the meantime, she's trying to use her time productively.

"Especially when we were shut down, that's when I took the time to set up a new marketing plan, edit my website and get everything kind of systemized, so that whenever I do become busy again I'm able to handle it," she said.

Hectic weekends

St. Louis makeup artist Mary Shope of MW Makeup Designs said most of her clients postponed and rescheduled their 2020 events rather than cancel them altogether. That's been a financial blessing, she said, but it's also resulted in schedule compression. She's pretty much given up on taking any weekends off this year, and she's already booking into 2022.

"There will be weekends where I have Friday, Saturday and Sunday weddings," she said.

Shope, who opened her business in 2011, said she's trying to reach cooperative arrangements with other providers in order to keep clients happy.

"Some dates they are wanting to reschedule to are already booked for us," she said. "So I've been trying to reach out to vendors who I think have a similar aesthetic or can offer services most similar to mine whereas in general, prior to COVID, that wasn't something we did, to be quite honest."

She also developed a general policy of



ERIN GAMBLE

returning deposits for cancellations in light of the pandemic situation.

"I just thought that it would be best for my business reputation in the long run," she said, adding that she was able to do so because she had some financial reserves.

"Luckily, there is not a ton of overhead in this business," she said. "I know for people who have more overhead — like caterers and venues — they are not doing as well."

Tanisha Watkins, a Jefferson County photographer, said her business of five years hasn't suffered too badly through the past year, with no cancellations and only a small reduction in volume.

"Wedding-wise, I haven't been extremely unfortunate," she said. "Most of my weddings have still been happening. I have just been looking at a few that have been rescheduled."

"I do believe that I'll be able to maintain my business," she added. "I just won't flourish as much as I had hoped to in the New Year."

Watkins, who photographs weddings in both St. Louis and Cape Girardeau, said she's found that face coverings are definitely optional at events in the latter community.

"I'm one of maybe 10 people at a 200-person wedding wearing a mask. Five of those 10 people are the caterers or the bar service or the videographer," she said.

"I've also had a few people move their weddings to St. Charles County when they were supposed to be in St. Louis County or St. Louis city because they don't want to follow the mandate for masks or they don't want to follow



TANISHA WATKINS

the maximum number of guests they can have," she added.

Laura Kirk, co-owner of Brookdale Farms, a venue that hosts weddings and other events, reports a similar experience. Based in Jefferson County, Kirk said she's seen a lot of event-refugees from counties to the north where COVID-19-related restrictions were more strict.

"We've picked up a lot of weddings that were in St. Louis city or St. Louis County because their venues either shut down or were really limited in the amount of people [they could hold]," she said.

In fact, event business has increased at Brookdale, Kirk said. Masking is optional at the 300-acre site, and many clients have expressed gratitude for that, she said.

"The biggest thing that we're hearing from brides is, 'I don't want to look back at my wedding pictures in five years and everybody is wearing a mask,'" she said.

Though bookings are up, wedding sizes have dropped as people try to minimize crowds, Kirk said. Staff members wear face coverings if desired by the client, and organizers of some events do ask for various precautions to be taken — including the use of extra tents to accommodate greater social distancing. In addition to employing such health measures as hand sanitizer stations, Brookdale is using more of its land to keep patrons spread out, she said. The aim is to provide freedom and flexibility for patrons while keeping everyone safe.

"We leave it up to our brides," she said. "It is their choice. It is their day."