

Tim Garbinsky (00:00):

Well, I have you here. I'd love to ask the following question. And while I'd mentioned in questions for all of our attendees, please, please, please ask questions. I'd love to get those out there. Um, but I do have a question that, uh, you know, as, as a leader, um, and from a cultural standpoint specifically, um, how do you project a steady hand and, you know, make employees feel safe, amid the sort of uncertainty and the choppiness of the economy and the sort of, you know, the, uh, the, um, just the uncertainty of, you know, sort of what's around the corner. What's your, what, what do you do to make sure that your employees feel that there's a steady hand on the rudder, so to speak?

Haydee Caldero (00:39):

Yeah, so I would say what has always been important to us since March, 2020 was communication, transparency and vulnerability. We were never a company or team, um, as a leadership team who said, we know exactly what's going to happen next and we're okay. Right. Um, we've worked to update our team appropriately as, um, we identify challenges and opportunities. Um, we've not been, uh, scared to say, we thought this, but unfortunately this isn't happening. And, um, we have to change and focus on something else like we did with, um, when we first thought that the, the stay at home order would only be a couple of weeks. And then we learned that all of our events were canceled for the foreseeable future. And we had to pivot to do better together boxes if we were going to survive. Um, the same thing has happened now with the Delta variant, where, uh, we've seen a significant, uh, number of live events, cancel and such that our projections for the year, uh, will likely not hit our initial targets because of those cancellations.

Haydee Caldero (01:59):

We have not tried to hide anything, but we've always ensured that people understand that they have security in their employment. Um, and if there were to be any issues with that, we would be proactive versus reactive. Um, and so I even recall at one team meeting where, um, each of the executive leaders, you know, shared their own COVID challenges, um, as to like the things that they were personally struggling with and, um, above and beyond being a company leader. And so I think that has helped people understand that we are all human beings. And so we're likely to make a mistake or misjudgment along the way, but that we have the best intentions for, for the company and for them. Um, and then I'll finally leave with, um, that, um, we have, um, also we, we also to communicate on the flip side of all the things we're doing to create the opportunities to thrive now in the future. So I think of course, there's the being open and honest about our present state, but also inspiring them to know that we're not sitting on, you know, sitting and waiting for a client to call us. We are being proactive in trying to continue to grow the company and thrive in the future.

Tim Garbinsky (03:33):

That's wonderful that also very sincerely tracks with everything that I've heard, there's a sort of almost like radical honesty, um, that I've heard from leadership in these moments. And I think whether you're a parent or whether you're a leader of a company, if you're responsible for somebody, I think that honesty is just so essential. People can get a sense when they're, you know, when they're not being dealt with in an honest manner. Um, and I think also just the human element, you, you, you just acknowledged, I think is just super important. You know, we're all people first and I, I, I'm very remiss to look to the pandemic for silver linings. I think that's a somewhat coach thing to do. And if anything, it has, it's allowed a lot of us to just remember that we're all people first, you know, we're all, we're all trying to do

our best with the cards that were being dealt, um, and making sure whoever you're also in charge of, or who you're working to support knows that too.

Tim Garbinsky ([04:35](#)):

It's I don't know if you can be successful without it. That's what I've heard across the board. So what you're saying, tracks just entirely for me, um, one wanted to touch on a few other things. Um, one is that your, your, of course you're a woman in leadership and, you know, no matter how you cut it, it's, it's still a fairly rare thing. And so I'm wondering what your experience has been as a woman in leadership at Crepes a latte. Um, and has it shaped in any way how you adapted or evolved to these new challenges as they've been presented?

Haydee Caldero ([05:14](#)):

Yeah, well, I think what, um, we're very fortunate at Crepes a Latte is that, um, while our original founder and CEO, Michael, uh, Rosenstein, um, is male, um, w you know, our top leadership team of five, it three out of the five of us are women. Um, and Michael, um, and we are never the quietest ones in the, in the room during meetings. And so the key really is from the beginning, Michael has always cared more about the contribution of a team member than in any way their gender or any other background trait, um, and such that, that is infuser from the beginning. Um, and, and something, when I joined, it's never, it's never been about gender as we talk about, um, how we contribute to the company, but it is sometimes that we have to be aware, not just around gender, but just other unique needs at different employees have and what accommodations we might sometimes have to make in order for them to thrive as employees, but require a different way than the standard way of working.

Haydee Caldero ([06:28](#)):

Right. So, um, we have, um, had working moms or maternity issues during COVID, where we just did things differently, but we did it based upon that unique person versus just we're going to create a policy that applies to everybody. I think when we talk about differences and we talk about applying your perspective as a woman leader, one woman might want as short of a maternity leave as possible. That's just her preference. And another woman might fund as long of a maternity leave as possible, or someone might want where they returned part-time for a while, and then come on full-time. And so I think that, um, when we come to these discussions, what, what perspectives do you have as a woman? It's I think as a woman, you've had to be very flexible and how you've achieved your personal success, because you've had different, uh, a different story, a different experience, and you can apply that to your organization in order to create policies that allow for that flexibility that seek at the end of the day, to be a great place for people to come to work and to feel that they can thrive, but that in Latin mode, that in order for as many people to thrive as possible, you have to be able to be nimble.

Haydee Caldero ([07:41](#)):

Um, and so, um, and so, um, I'm very lucky to have a wonderful, um, team of partners on our management team that support this for all of our employees and, uh, to have also throughout my career have had great mentors, both female and male who have, um, of course recognize that I'm a, um, a talented female professional, but to also just give me opportunities to succeed and, uh, support them along the way. And I hope to have done that to a number of mentees and, uh, that I've supported in my, in my career as well.

Tim Garbinsky ([08:20](#)):

And that's great again, that just speaks to the human element. So much of, um, you know, not making a monolith out of any sort of one demographic of person, um, while just, you know, treating them as a full human and with individual needs. Um, so I really appreciate your candor on that response. We are beginning to get quite a few questions from our audience, which I'm interjecting here. Yeah. Um, like, like I, like we both actually sort of have been envisioned they would be about recruiting and retention. So the first question is what changes sort of specifically you make in your talent search and retention that you felt worked?

Haydee Caldero ([09:01](#)):

Well, one is we invested in a full-time recruiter, and I think a lot of employee, small companies sometimes think that that's like an unnecessary expense that, you know, a department manager can handle it, or one person who's kind of playing different HR roles. But I think in order to really get quality, especially in a timely manner, you have to have a recruitment, um, expertise. Um, and we had in the past relied a lot on outside recruiters, and I don't think they understood our culture to the level of that an internal person has and is as motivated for that person's longterm success. So one was that two is we updated some of the employment materials that we, uh, made available, uh, three because, um, you know, we have a smaller team. So right now, uh, than we had in the past, we got more people involved in recruitment because, um, if, if only one person is doing it, um, it's just too much work for one or two people.

Haydee Caldero ([10:07](#)):

So we got more people, I think that created more of a team element to support onboarding. And I'm seeing a lot of people really raise their hands and support training, uh, to alleviate the burden on just one or two people. Um, and I think it's because they were part of the recruitment process, um, that, that they felt in some way, uh, skin in the game in ensuring someone comes on and is ramped up successfully. So it's investment some new communication materials, especially around east app that we kind of worked on enhancing, getting more people involved in recruitment and then getting, uh, and then them also helping support the onboarding process. And then as I said, we did that intro. We did our employee hub intranet to make it easier when we do onboard someone that they have a central hub to find a lot of key materials and that, um, that alleviates them from feeling like they don't know where to find key pieces of information to be successful in their first several weeks.

Tim Garbinsky ([11:07](#)):

Uh, I love the idea of the internet for onboarding as well, especially in remote environments as they are now. And just any sort of digital or virtual tactic for that only will make that stronger. Uh, another question that came in, you definitely touched on, but I'm going to further it a little bit. So the question was, do you talk more about being an ESOP company as part of your recruiting efforts and you did touch about that, I'm wondering to what extent then do you go into what it means to be employee owned or to what the ESOP actually is in the recruiting process?

Haydee Caldero ([11:38](#)):

Yeah, right now, I think that's a rule that I feel, um, I handle a lot of, um, and I'd like to handle less of I'd like it to be more incorporated into our overall, you know, each person that they talk to. And so maybe that's enhanced training, uh, that we'll have to incorporate, uh, moving forward and our next wave of hires. But it's definitely something that I bring up when I meet with them in the interview process. And then I also highlight in, uh, the, um, in the offer process and actually when we send the offer, that's

one of the most significant parts that we, uh, highlight. We of course use NCEO materials. So thank you for always having so many great tools for us, um, to give them as takeaways, um, as well. And when we, you know, one of the things I'm going to I'm work we're working on is to improve the offer letter experience and make it a little bit more visual.

Haydee Caldero ([12:39](#)):

So we've worked to kind of do that a little bit on some visual communications for our, um, and it's nothing super fancy. It's just rather than giving them, like, I think HR people, we can be very, like, just give them a list of things that we offer and like that's, that's sufficient or send them to a website and can read it when you work to create kind of like a, like a newsletter looking piece for a new employee. Uh, and we include that as part of the offer letter, but I want to visualize that experience a little bit more to show that, like, when you get our offer letter, you it's coming from our team. It's not just coming from me, um, as one of the hiring managers. So, um, I'm trying to work through how we can make that like a much more unique experience.

Haydee Caldero ([13:23](#)):

Ideally it would include video and some, uh, visual elements in addition to that kind of newsletter piece. But even on that first piece, they see the list of our next team events that we have. Uh, so they, they know like, wow, there's the Christmas party and the employee ownership month event and the Thanksgiving event. So those are the things that, um, we're trying to elevate to enhance our, um, what being an employee owned company means. And, you know, one of the things I've been thinking about as we talked about, um, as we talked about recruitment, you and I was really just how much as an ESOP community, we have empowers of numbers. So we have about 2 million employees who are members or employees of the 5,800 privately held employee owned companies. Right? Of course, they're not all a hundred percent employee owned their various levels.

Haydee Caldero ([14:22](#)):

But if you were to think about that relative to the number of employees at apple, Google and Facebook, which is about 350 K combined, we have 2 million and they have 350 K yet I'm most, um, college educated employees, or even non-college educated employees. If you were to say to a young person who's 22 years old, would you like to work for Facebook? Would you like to work for Google? What, regardless of what they're going to do for those and say, oh my God, that's so cool. Like that's a place I want to work for. Right. I would love for us to think about a way to leverage our numbers. So if we had a 10 to 15% participation rate, we would equal the workforces of those three companies. How could we create, um, employee ownership, education for the masses, so that a 20 year old knows employee ownership is something that they can aspire to at as they enter their career.

Haydee Caldero ([15:22](#)):

Um, and that, that's a question that they ask their, uh, recruiters. When they're talking to those companies, are you employed young? Do you have employee ownership options available for me? Um, and I think there's so many organic opportunities that we can do to have elevate what employee ownership means and how much it impacts so many millions of people in our country and hopefully millions more, um, in the future. So, um, I do think there's a role to elevate employee ownership in recruitment, so that it becomes a key thing that you asked about in the recruitment process. Uh, just like you would ask about healthcare benefits or a 401k plan.

Tim Garbinsky ([16:02](#)):

That's fantastic. I, I was very fearful for a moment that the interviewer was about to become the interviewee. So I'm glad it wasn't a full on question for me. Um, so that's, that's a perspective I've genuinely never thought of. I thought of, I often think about this as one big community. Of course, I often think about how we can communicate as sort of one, one, not entity necessarily, but all on message, but the idea of like us as an industry, communicating in that respect to the point where it becomes a part of the recruiting, I think is really, I think it's essential in a lot of companies are beginning to do it. I think if we could start to get on the same page there, we start to make even more waves. But I love that perspective of all of us are a part of one big employee ownership company in a certain respect.

Tim Garbinsky ([16:52](#)):

Um, I think that's, I think that's a really brilliant perspective. Um, and anybody out here watching, uh, I do genuinely encourage you all to make, make, make good reference of employee ownership. And ESOP's in your recruiting. Um, anecdotally from what we've heard, it it's a meaningful offer, uh, for people out there. And then speaking of offer, I do want to also call out the, making the offer letter sort of a more of a team component, I think is a really unique thing as well. I think there's probably a lot of different, um, just things already implemented in the company that you don't think to, to augment or to improve upon just because there's just a matter of course. And I think each and every one could probably be augmented by things that are similar to what you're describing. So I really love that perspective. I have another question I want to ask from the audience audience, keep asking your questions. Um, I know we have a little bit of time left, so hopefully we can address them all. Um, so this is, is great. Uh, when not that the other ones weren't, uh, when we come out of this, how do you see Crepes a latte being positioned relative to its competitors and does being an ESOP or employee owned change that?

Haydee Caldero ([18:02](#)):

Well, what makes cribs lots of fantastic is that we're truly the market leader we're, uh, over 60% market share and our competitors are not true, not in many ways that they're not true look alike to us. That being said, we always have to be at the head of innovation. So as we continue to, uh, develop COVID all of our three core business lines have been improved upon and will continue to be improved upon. So, uh, we launched better together, uh, boxes, which many of you have received in the mail. Um, and those we've, we've worked to better to find who our audiences and what those boxes, uh, should be positioned as we've had a number of media, like large meeting events, such as morning star. They used our service in person, um, at their recent Morningstar conference in Chicago. And then all of the exhibitors at that conference also received a 200 exhibitors, also received the better together boxes.

Haydee Caldero ([19:04](#)):

So we see that NCO was going to do that. They were going to send some boxes to the virtual attendees, and then the in-person attendees were going to receive a box in San Diego. So we see them emerging of those two, uh, key business lines. Um, and then we also launched a grab and go product for live events that are met at first to address some COVID safety issues. And right now we're seeing that last and it's been more to support a lower budget clients. So as I said, we'll continue to be, we want to continue to be the market leader, and we want to continue to integrate our service lines and, um, as well as launch new products and services to continue to be ahead of the curve.

Tim Garbinsky ([19:53](#)):

Gotcha. Gotcha. I, um, I really appreciate you sort of outlining that and we, of course, are delighted to work with, you know, the industry leader and for the industry leader then to be employee owned is just, you know, chef's kiss cherry on top. So we're just delighted that that's the case. And we're, we're, we've been just very lucky to partner with you in it's, you know, it's made the pivot to virtual, um, it's softened that landing, right. You know, because how, how do you create those moments? That's a big part of what makes these events tick. Um, and it's been, it's been really helpful to have you all as our partners in that, um,

Haydee Caldero ([20:32](#)):

The feeling is more than mutual and CEO has been an amazing partner and advocate, and we've learned so much from NCEO as a supporter and making our ESOP better, as well as just the support that you guys gave us, uh, during some challenging times.

Tim Garbinsky ([20:50](#)):

Love to hear that and glad we could, we could do that for you. I hope we can do that for other companies along the way. Um, I have few more questions for you. We have about five minutes left and then we'll wrap up. Um, I do want to ask real quick, one more question from the audience, which is, would you describe your company's leadership style is more top down or is there sort of a bottom up leadership style at play as well?

Haydee Caldero ([21:14](#)):

Well, I think it's both. Um, so, um, I hope that's not like the easy answer when it comes to executing events or just big challenges. Our team takes on so much initiative and just goes above and beyond. We'll we, we have some events that, you know, our team might be working until one in the morning to execute. Um, and, and, and they, they get it done. We might be in five or six cities and a major issue happens. And before a call gets rolled up to me, there's been several people who've tried to touch it and solve it, or an ideally they've come, they're coming to me for a solution, but they may need to spend some money. So they just need to ensure that, uh, that they have the go ahead to do that. And so, um, I think in many ways, yes, the organization has a problem solver, a team culture that allows us to do things at scale.

Haydee Caldero ([22:12](#)):

There are some events where we may serve a hundred thousand servings over three days. So that means getting a hundred people into a convention hall, uh, having all the products and supplies delivered to that convention hall and properly, um, um, set up and then delivered over three days and overseeing the general management of all that across, uh, an exhibit hall that is probably several football fields, uh, uh, in, in, in regards to size. Um, and, and they get it done. Um, I think from a top-down perspective, what we're always working to instill is, you know, uh, high level sound, financial management, um, ensuring that the key, uh, people and assets have resources available to them. So if we need to start hiring more people, if we need to invest in more equipment, those things are being planned in advance before we ever really need them, um, in an emergency. And that we're in bedding, um, and ensuring the continuation of our culture, um, thrives and, and, and is enhanced, uh, during the present and preparing that for the future.

Tim Garbinsky ([23:33](#)):



Wonderful. As we enter the final two minutes, um, I was wondering just to be a little bit more forward thinking now, we've talked a lot about what you've done to get to this point. Um, but of course, a big part of evolution, which is this year's theme is also sort of looking towards the future. And we talked a little bit about that as well. And I'm wondering what, what are you most excited about for this upcoming year for 2021 going into 2022?

Haydee Caldero ([23:59](#)):

Oh my gosh. Well, personally, I would like to be a road warrior yet. You know, I'm seeing my points go down. Um, but no more importantly, I'm just so excited for our, our, our ESOP and for the new team members who have the opportunity to contribute to our ESOP of we're going to hit our fourth year, um, as an ESOP in 2022. And so then we'll have new challenges as we start getting more people, more people fully vested and, um, and seeing their, you know, the growth of their, their, um, contribution through their stock. And then we'll have all the new team members that will be actively working to engage and, um, educate about the value of, of being employee owned and how they can contribute to our rebuilding and our growth. So to me, that's one of the things that I feel I'm most excited about because that will touch our, our strategy and our rebuilding and our growth. Um, if we have the right people motivated to execute on that plan,

Tim Garbinsky ([25:05](#)):

That is wonderful answer there. Haydee we are at just under a minute left. It seems. Um, so if you have any final thoughts before I wrap up, I would like to leave the stage open for you just to issue for our attendees, whatever words of wisdom you'd like to leave them with.

Haydee Caldero ([25:23](#)):

Well, um, I wish everybody an amazing weekend, a chart refueled by a three-day conference that has given us so many new things to think about or reminders on thinking that maybe we have kind of put on hold, but needs to revisit before we, uh, finish the calendar year. Uh, think, um, our sponsors empire, as well as, um, the whole team at NCO has been amazing at communicating and sending out all these amazing emails and reminders and updates that just make you feel like the conference was the last 30 days, because you've just been so embedded in our lives. They truly, um, and I'm so looking forward to Seattle 2022, and we're gonna keep our fingers crossed for, um, a virtual event that allows for the in-person, but still provide that digital platform that can help, uh, allow more people to participate in.

Tim Garbinsky ([26:23](#)):

Awesome. Thank you so much. I, they, I just want to very quickly before we jump off here, I want to thank of course you- Haydee it's been my absolute pleasure to be able to get to know you over the course of preparing this keynote. I'm so glad that our audiences have the opportunity to hear you. Um, I want to, of course, thank our sponsor for this keynote, which is empire evaluation, very grateful to their support as always. And yeah, we do hope to see you all in Seattle. That's where the annual conferences planned to be in April of 2022. But in the meanwhile you have an enormous thanks to Haydee and enormous thanks to our illustrator, Emily Marko for making this as engaging as it was, and for sort of cleaning me up a little bit there in illustrated form, um, and a big things as well to the AV team for making this happen as well. Thank you so much for attending. We hope you enjoy the rest of the fall forum, and we hope to see you soon. Thank you.