

## Sport Aurora conference helps aid small businesses

Sport Aurora's live Zoom conference last week outlined multiple tactics to support small businesses through sport.

Marketing Specialist Lisa Dunbar instructed the community on what they can do to promote their business through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The session, entitled, "Changing Your Game Plan and Leveraging Virtual Communities to Support Your Sport Organization, Athletes and Parents" combats the pandemic by adapting to the virtual community market in the hopes of providing service options to members and citizens.

A long-time resident of Aurora, Dunbar shares that although uncertainty may create an overwhelming environment, she suggests showing what you know is the first step.

"We want to try and not to be where there is a spot of uncertainty, and if there is, call it," Dunbar explained. "Here is what we know today and here is what we're doing on the back end. You may be a sport organization that has not had an essentialized place to communicate with athletes and our members, you can say, 'we're developing a website. We're developing this back-end work while working our way through COVID.'"

In her 20-minute virtual presentation, Dunbar was invited on behalf of See What She Can Do, a community dedicated to promote women's activity.

Dunbar said this is an opportunity for businesses to show what they're capable of, advancing to her first lesson on pivoting the service model.

As a base for this example, Dunbar explained the recent strategies used by Cross-Fit Newmarket and Aurora Central. Both have seemingly found a way to serve their members.

"The change, if you will, or their pivot, is they now offer virtual classes. They're hosting Zoom classes with virtual strength training or some specialty classes. They've put out a resiliency challenge to their members and to their family and friends. They're also offering to members if they need equipment to continue to train at home, they are welcome to borrow it."

Both companies have also reached out to the local food business to discuss solutions around healthy food and nutrition.

The Spartan Race, scheduled for this year in 2020, is also continuing to promote their race to people and are encouraging residents to sign up. According to Dunbar, although there is still a degree of uncertainty, the

race will resume in 2021 if it cannot be completed this year.

Other companies, such as 3D Printing Canada, Magna and Mill Street Brewery are all collectively taking a course of action as well to work outside of their markets. Mill Street has manufactured hand sanitizer, Magna has developed face masks and 3D Printing Canada has manufactured headbands and masks.

Another company that has pivoted through COVID-19, is Bauer, manufacturing face shields for front line workers instead of goalie masks and skates.

Dunbar presented a six-step process to those tuning in for ways to re-imagine yourself as a business. Joining natural community networks, partnering with complementary businesses to launch new services, providing contract offers with other businesses to support each other, be a thoughtful leader in offering blog posts, for instance, launch fundraising and offer virtual trials were all mentioned in the meeting.

In more ways than one, sports businesses can serve clients, but it is also about adhering to the current predicament that is outside of the sports realm and how you can help.

Capitalizing on this moment to showcase what your business is all about may have the opportunity of furthering your development as a company once everything goes back to normal.

**By Robert Belardi**