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Episode 6: Why MediaLink Believes the Streaming Wars will Inevitably have Some Major Casualties - and Why Brands are Facing an 'Existential' Challenge in this Era

Mike (18s):

Hey guys, this is Mike Shields. And this week on Next in Marketing, I got to talk with MediaLink CEO and chairman Michael Kassan. We discussed how his clients are rustling with the COVID-19 crisis. What he thinks are the prospects of TV advertising and the streaming world, and why consumers are still grappling with the importance of digital privacy.

Mike (38s):

We're lucky enough to have MediaLink founder, CEO, chairman Michael Kassan. Michael, do I have your, your role and title, right? Thank you for joining us today.

Michael (48s):

You do. And, and I would add in as well, friend of Mike Shields for many, many years.

Mike (54s):

Absolutely, good friend. I think of when I think of people that are, would struggle with social distance, that you are at the top of the list. I feel you're a man who probably does not like this being apart from people so much.

Michael (1m 5s):



Well, you know, it's funny you say that Mike, because it's arguable that MediaLink was founded on the nugget of social connectivity and you know, such, we've been very forthright in our view that this is not about social distance. It's about physical distance, but really enhancing social connectivity. And that's not just semantics - just the fact that we can do this as opposed to having a martini in front of us. And, and I will add for those who care, I don't drink during the week.

Michael (1m 37s):

I have worn off my standard issue martini during the week, you know, because I think it's just good to stay focused and healthy right now, but this works and this social connectivity that we're experiencing during this moment actually is going to have, I believe long term impact on our industry, but on the world at large. So yeah. We're learning how to navigate it.

Mike (2m 9s):

I wish I could say I'm with you with the drinking less. Maybe I'll get there. Only a few weeks into this, but we'll see. I do want to ask you, so I was thinking about this, you and I were both at CES, probably. I'm sure you were there this year. I was there and coming out of that event, I'm sure you had a vision for what this year was going to look like. Probably lots of transformation and disruption, but not like this. What did you think the year was looking like? And then maybe let's talk about when you started to realize, oh my God, things are really going to be different.

Michael (2m 38s):

Yeah. We were looking at this year, very optimistically. We had good projections on tap. And, you know, as I think back to January, there was a lot of exciting projects that we were about to kick off. Thankfully many of them have continued. They've taken on a different cue perhaps, but they're, they're not, they're not running for the hills. Thank God. Number one. Number two, it became pretty real for us in late February, early March, like most traveled to New York the first week of March and the last week of February.

Michael (3m 16s):



And I didn't think much of it. I was on a ski retreat with a banking group with Lion Tree. With a bunch of senior, senior industry executives, but not just marketing and advertising. I mean, entertainment, most players. And we were all, it was that last weekend of February, first week in March. And we were all kind of doing this with our handshakes, that we weren't kissing and hugging as much, but it was kind of still ha-ha you know, nobody was laughing.

Michael (3m 47s):

I don't mean that it was hard to wrap your head around. And we were sitting next to one another dinner and we were doing the elbow, but we weren't taking it as seriously as one week later, we all would. And I mean really one week later, cause I left their ski retreat on March the 2nd, I think, which was a Tuesday, if I'm not mistaken and by March 10th, which was a Tuesday or the next, you know, whatever that next Tuesday was, I was marched down - the world had changed dramatically.

Michael (4m 20s):

So I think that was the week where everybody went, this is the real deal. And we need to be thinking about it, you know, with no, with no help from leadership in this, in this crazy circumstance, you know, we were kind of on our own in terms of navigating what was real and I'm old enough to remember the Memorex commercial of is this Ella or is this Memorex?

Michael (4m 50s):

I'm not sure we realized it was Ella until that week of March 9th, when all of a sudden everything broke loose. So yeah, that would be when, but back to your question, the core of your question, Mike, what did we anticipate for 2020? We anticipated certainly at the intersection of marketing media, advertising entertainment and technology, which is where I think MediaLink lives - that intersection. We were looking at a good year and we were thinking there was a lot of activity that had been completed in terms of integration and business models.



Michael (5m 30s):

And there was a lot of movement in areas like that, which are important for us. We felt that the private equity community was going to be active in M&A, and MediaLink gets involved fortunately in a lot of the diligence work in that space. So again, from a personal perspective and MediaLink perspective and writ large, an essential perspective, my parent company, we were looking forward to a good year. And obviously as my, as my mother used to say, as we plan, God laughs. You know, I don't think anyone's laughing here, but you know, the, the spirit of that, the sentiment of that remark, I think rings true here.

Mike (6m 13s):

Yeah, very similarly around that time, I was at big media companies, internal events, and everyone was kind of doing the same thing where they're, you know, laughing about not shaking hands. But I remember asking a senior executive around that time, like, are you worried about this year? And he was saying, well, you know, it's not like we have our supply chains coming out of China. I think our business is different. And it was just, and I'm not saying this guy didn't know he's talking about, it's just like, no one could foresee how fast things would change and how to wrap your head around it.

Michael (6m 40s):

No. And, and look, you know, as we've said, Mike, for many years, good news travels, fast, bad news travels faster in this environment. What we've been saying immediately is we're in a moment where days are like weeks weeks, or like months and months, or like years. I can't imagine that we're here on April 21st and all of this started just five weeks. I mean, it feels like five years that we'd been in this, in this mode and yet it's only five weeks, at least from a Southern California perspective, which is where we are right now.

Michael (7m 21s):

We don't expect we're back, you know, batten down the hatches, at least til May 15th. That's what, you know, the city and the state have said. But as I was saying to my wife last night, well, if they open the restaurants, I guess, you know, if there's appropriate physical distancing and whatnot,



we've been ordering in from restaurants, from above the restaurants that we frequent anyway. And you know, so we've been doing that, but I guess we'll go back, but I'm not sure.

Michael (7m 52s):

I don't know when, and I don't know when that comfort level is surely I was chatting with a buddy of mine, with whom I share my Laker seats and Dodgers seats. And, you know, I don't know. I mean, I've been a Dodger, a season ticket holder since 19, but at least in my family, my dad, and now me since 1959, wow. That's a long time and a Laker season ticket holder for not that long, but for, you know, 30 plus years, I don't want to give up those seats, but I'm not sure when the comfort level comes back to go to sporting events like that, it will get back to, you know, some sense of where we were before.

Michael (8m 33s):

But I don't think the snapback is just like,

Mike (8m 36s):

Yeah. And you know, and it might be with masks and taking your temperature, but it's going to be a whole new reality for awhile.

Michael (8m 42s):

I can show you my standard issue masks or the more fashion forward ones I've got, you know, we're all, we're all gearing up. And I will tell you, Mike, when we do our afternoon walk around, you know, our neighborhood here in LA, I'm actually dismayed when I see people walking without masks.

Mike (8m 60s):

No, you're right. I mean, we, this is, we have to take it seriously. It's it seems crazy, but this is real.



Michael (9m 5s):

I haven't challenged anyone yet, but I kind of, you know, I I'm, I'm a lover, not a fighter, but you know, the answer is you kind of look cross sided people. You're not doing it. And you know, I know there's uncertainty. Gee, if I'm out for a walk and I'm by myself, do I need to wear a mask? Well, the answer is you don't live by yourself in the world. So I'm actually one who's been, you know, very respectful of that and understanding that you're protecting others, not just yourself,

Mike (9m 32s):

What are clients asking at that time? Should we cut our advertising? What should we do? What are the conversations like initially? And how has it changed in the past few weeks?

Michael (9m 40s):

First off, what we've tried to do is demonstrate with our C suite client relationships and we have them at all levels. So I don't, we don't just talk to the C suite by any means. We talk to the real people in the business as well. And those are all real people. Don't get me wrong choice of words, but it's not just, you know, on high it's in the, in the trenches as well, leadership and, and you know, the importance of the leadership that we need in our companies and in our brands and in our, in our world, frankly.

Michael (10m 14s):

And so we, we, we focus a lot on that mic and we also focus on what we've identified as the transitional normal. It's nice. And, and, you know, I've retired like to say, what's the new normal going to be? Anybody who tells you they know is full of baloney cause they, when none of us do. And so what we've tried to focus on with our client partners is this transition, this, you know, it's a continuum we're here now.



Michael (10m 47s):

We're going to end up here at some point happens in the middle, taking the Gretzky of it all. You know, you want to skate to where the puck is, but none of us really know where the puck is going to be. Even for that matter where it's going eating now and you've gotta be able to move. And you know, what we've seen is a lot of advisory work on the kind of tone of the messaging. I was asked a question yesterday on a live interview at age, can people start to ask for the order?

Michael (11m 21s):

I mean, that, wasn't the exact question, but is it tacky in this day and age to ask for the order? Well, you know, me for a long time, I, I never think it's tacky to ask for it. You know, I mean, there's certain parts of my DNA that are not going to change regardless of external facts and figures, but you've got to ask differently right now. And I mean, at large, if you are a brand, should you be putting up that, you know, on sale now? And does that look tone deaf? And the answer is you've got to manage it differently.

Michael (11m 52s):

The messaging is going be important as we, as we make our way back as we are in that transition. I don't think it's tacky ever to ask for the order. I just think it has to be done. And again, you know how I mean, escrow? Absolutely. It has to be done with a different set of tonality right now.

Mike (12m 13s):

Are you finding, are you trying to talk some of your clients into <inaudible> then, you know, the natural instinct I'm sure is what, what do we need to cut right now to get through this time? Should we, marketing's easy to pull. Should we pull it? You've been through these periods before, I'm sure where it pays off. If you don't pull everything, but it's also very hard to tell a hotel brand right now and not to keep advertisement, right?



Michael (12m 36s):

Yeah. I mean, you know, if at the beginning of this in early March, I was getting calls from friends of mine, not in the industry, Jane saying, gee, Michael, you know, why are these, you know, why is a movie studio advertising? Or why is, why are we saying, you know, a hotel chain advertising? And the answer is, well, first of all, some of that couldn't be caught real, but second of all, people still need to get their messages out. But there are certain categories, Mike, needless to say categories like, you know, and we represent so many of the companies in the entertainment industry are just being pummeled on one hand.

Michael (13m 11s):

Thankfully the direct to consumer apps that many have launched and others will be launching, I think will we'll do well and continue to, as we all are bingeing, I do, I do want to ask you a question, what are you bingeing on? But we'll get to that in a minute. But, but you know, truly, it's hard for them to come back quickly when you don't know what the release schedule is. You don't know when these movies are coming back online, but more importantly, when the movie theaters are going to be a place that people are comfortable to go to, which we will, you know, at some point we may, we may sit a few seats apart, but it reminds me of a anecdotally of a story years ago when my wife and I were at a movie theater and we were on the aisle and the seat next to me, she was kind of four or five seats away.

Michael (13m 60s):

There was a, a nice, I want to say older woman, she's probably younger than I am, but he said to my wife, you know, I just want to let you know this movie is two hours and 20 minutes and I'm a two hour gal, which we all laughed and thought that was kind of funny, giving us a heads up. She'd may be be drinking a nature run at some point. Now she'll be far enough away from me that it won't bother me when I passed.

Mike (14m 28s):

Yeah. It's no, it's no big deal. That'll yeah, that'd be part of the buffer will be helpful.



Michael (14m 32s):

You know, those categories are going to be slower to come back just because their business models are more challenged. But the difference that I think we have to focus on Mike, as you, you know, so many, we're trying to find historical precedent. We're trying to say 2008, we're trying to say 911. We're trying to say the Arab oil embargo in the seventies, we're trying to talk about '91 '92 when interest rates were through the roof and we were in a different sort of a recessionary period.

Michael (15m 4s):

I don't think any of that applies here. We can learn some historical lessons. This is different. First of all, as we've been hearing and this, I do agree with this wasn't a financial crisis. This was a health crisis that careened into a massive financial crisis, but that means the idea or opportunity or hope for a V-shape recovery. It may become more real because the underlying fundamentals that work were there and we just paused it.

Michael (15m 35s):

We just stopped the economy. We just said, stop in the name of love here. Stop in the name of COVID. So maybe it does snap back faster in that regard, right? The same. No. And, and do I think that categories that will have massive impact potentially forever and forever is a long time. Yeah, I think travel's never gonna snap back the way it did. I don't think companies are going to have the same travel budget profile that they had did historically, any sales person who says they must be on the road all the time.

Michael (16m 10s):

Cause they need that face time. As you said at the beginning, I'm a big believer in close of up close and personal and that, that, that interaction, but I'm also becoming used to this and this works. And I think the human condition habituates faster than we give credit to the human condition. And you can get used to a lot of stuff you get to, I think habits get formed in like a week, sometimes in a very short period of time.



Michael (16m 42s):

You, you get into a habit, we're getting into habits here. Now some of them are ones we're going to want to break out of quickly, which is, let me get back to work. Let me get, you know, we're working, but let me get back to my office. Let me get back to my regular daily routine. That's going to happen. But I think with permanent change, I just saw somewhere again, this morning, commercial real estate, you know, not a time to be long run commercial real estate office footprints are going to change.

Michael (17m 12s):

People are going to be looking at what their needs are office wise in an entirely different way.

Mike (17m 18s):

Flexibility and fluidity are going to be, are going to be vital.

Michael (17m 21s):

Absolutely. And you know, we're fortunate in our New York office different than Chicago, LA, London, and San Francisco. We have more space in New York. So we could literally come back today and have our folks. We have an open plan and the main, you know, separated that makes it a little easier for us to come back. But you know, the idea of the water cooler is taking on a whole new meaning right now we're in a water, in a water cooler right now. It's just a water cooler.

Mike (17m 52s):

It is going to be fascinating because this is so, like we said, it's such a social industry. It's such an industry of relationships and it's, and it's been an industry defined by so many events. Do we see a real fitting out? I wonder what happened?



Michael (18m 4s):

Well, look, you know, events are something that's near and dear to my heart with, you know, MediaLink having such an important presence at, at can and seek us and obviously can being our sister company now, you know, for the last three plus years. So tough call, you know, really tough call to have to take one of the most important. I think arguably the most important tenfold in our industry and take it away for a year, obviously a tough call from the economic perspective from my parent company.

Michael (18m 34s):

But thankfully, and fortunately they're in a solid position and, you know, while it's a big storm and trust me, it's not fun. We can weather it. And, and that's the good news. And what we hope is you might've seen yesterday, Cannes lions along with work and media link have, you know, put out into the market. The idea that we're going to virtualize for 20, 20 some sort of an event relative to both celebrating creativity with the lions and what I would characterize as the conference side of can, that media link has a more important role in we're going to bring the MediaLink beach to life.

Michael (19m 16s):

We're going to actually try and virtualize it, you know, in short order, anecdotally again, I share with you Mike, we did this a couple of years ago with our Dunkin donuts client when they were planning to join us in Cannes at the last minute, they had to make a change and couldn't come, this was about three or four years ago. So what we did in as much as they're located in Canton, Massachusetts, where their headquarters are, we said, we're going to bring canned to Canton.

Michael (19m 46s):

And we did, it was in a year when cam was going on in full force. So we've done it before and we're going to do it again. Now we don't know if we're going to do it virtually like this, or once we can start to have some more semblance of reality on travel, maybe we will go to certain, you know, cities and, and bring a virtual effect. But the MediaLink beach, I think established last year, replacing our normal place of business during Canned at the Carlton hotel.



Michael (20m 18s):

I think that has become more than just a thing I think, or more than just a place. I think the MediaLink beach took on a thing it became. And we're going to bring that thing to you somehow some way in 21, whilst at the same time, being very excited, focused, longer term, of course, on what 2021 will be when we get back to the Croisette and we get back to a live interaction and we get back to some celebration of creativity in, in person.

Michael (20m 51s):

And we get back to the hotel du cap and, you know, opening night parties and things of that sort. Anybody can take their shots at that part of Cannes. I would tell you as a defender of it and as a generator of it, those things matter. We're not in a business where you're not allowed to have fun at the same time as I'm getting work done. And I would take anybody to task on the fact that the quote unquote glamour side of can, or the party side of can isn't relevant.

Michael (21m 23s):

It's very relevant and it's very relevant to how we do business. And it's very relevant to getting business done.

Mike (21m 30s):

Let's let me take a step back from, it's hard not to make, to view everything through Corona right now, but one of the biggest stories of this year, and it still is, it was going to be this the streaming Wars. And you have, you have the biggest media companies and some of the biggest companies on the planet and taking enormous swings, right. Is to try and reshape how, how we consume content. What do you make of where things are now? You have, you have Disney with this breakout.



Mike (22m 1s):

You have Apple with trying to find its way you've got Quibi. And then you've got some other really big swings coming around the corner. What do you make of where things are now and then how it was exchanged, do you think in light of the stay at home life, we're living,

Michael (22m 13s):

As you know, we're, we're fortunate. We work with just about every single one of those companies in some way, shape or form. And we're very proud of that. Obviously, you know, you mentioned Quibi and there we've been working with, with Jeffrey and Meg since the inception of what was new TV initially pre Quibi. So we're happy with, with what they've seen in the first couple of weeks here actually caught a great episode of one of the shows last night, I highly recommended and I can't drink and dummy.

Michael (22m 48s):

It's a Quibi series. It's very good. It's kind of like mannequin, but a little rougher, you know, the funny Kim Kittle movie, but, but it's, it's a little racy, but good. I'll leave it at that. But you know, I think with what Disney has achieved in record time, it's extraordinary. I have a lot of hope and, and belief in what peacock is going to do, bringing out their Avon version.

Michael (23m 18s):

And we're needless to say very excited about HBO max hitting on now, I think I saw the date today of May 27th. We had a view before all of the Corona virus hoopla and, and you know, tragedy hit us. And that view was, I think, backed up by the research that Forester or somebody had done, which said the average consumer is gonna subscribe to somewhere between four and five. You know, I don't know what that means. We can't do four and a half, but yeah.

Michael (23m 49s):

Or maybe Quibi's a half, cause it's short. I'm kidding. But you know, some, somewhere in that range was going to be the new bundle, if you will, that consumers were going to create, I'm using



that term bundle artfully, but you know how I mean it, yeah. And that was based both on consumers having to make binary choices just from an economic perspective, pre COVID, you know, it's one thing for folks that are a little more fortunate to be able to say, yeah, well I'll add another subscription for \$5.99 or \$12.99 or \$4.99 or whatever it may be.

Michael (24m 24s):

But maybe in the new world, it's going to be less likely that people do that regardless of their viewing habits, regardless of their being home more, which we will, regardless of the desire for content, which is going to get even more. So, you know, we don't have sports, the numbers on the **Michael** Jordan last dance that tells you the desire is huge. Hunger is huge for sports. I mean, it's a great, you know, I've watched the first couple of episodes and it's amazing, but I don't know if it would be amazing in a normal time, I guess it would.

Michael (24m 60s):

But again, human condition is desiring content. And the, like what we're seeing, however, is this binge mentality is only going to get more. So I'm not on a conversation, an interview or any dialogue where you don't get to, what are you bingeing on? And you know, you're listening to it. I'm sure you're in your business, you know, travels and as well in your personal conversations, you have those same dialogues.

Michael (25m 30s):

I still think I would buy the strategy of four to five is what people end up with. It's anybody's guess what's going to comprise those four to five, but I think it's clear that Netflix isn't going anywhere. Disney's obviously not going anywhere. HBO is not going anywhere. Peacock's not going anywhere. You know, Amazon is not going anywhere. Apple's not going anywhere. Quibi is not going anywhere. I'm already at seven and I don't know who I've left out, but you're going to have a lot of entrance, whether it's all access and what Viacom reimagines with CBS and Viacom under that heading of all access, you know, that they had already established, you can't write discovery out of this story as well.



Michael (26m 18s):

They're going to do something. They have enormous amount of content and you're going to be bringing it somehow some way, some shape, some form and, and down the line. So it, you know, if you do what we believed before four or five, I guess there's some people that aren't making that top list. That's going to be up to the consumer as it always is. What's going to be interesting. What is your take on, you have some, like you mentioned Netflix And Disney and the Amazon primarily no advertising there and there there's a generation coming up now that has, is used to living on demand and not having to deal with interruptive advertising.

Michael (26m 59s):

There are your clients worried that the, the, the last year piece from television are going to be hard to replace through this proliferation of services. They were worried before about how do they play in, you know, they meaning the marketers, how to marketers plan in an S FOD world. And there isn't, you know, I can't give away too much, but that's the stuff that we deal with strategically at media link on a regular basis. How do you exist in a, in an S FOD world? Well, with peacock, we're going to have Avon.

Michael (27m 30s):

And I think, you know, HBO has at least, you know, lit up that conversation months ago that they would have an Avon alternative, you know, after they launched HBO max on May 27th, they'll have something behind that. So I think there are going to be ways that marketers can participate, but it is a real challenge. And Mike, I'd go as far as to say strong word, but it's an existential challenge. If too many of us move away from Avon in any way, shape and form and go to S flop.

Michael (28m 1s):

Now, again, economics enter into that and the need to watch and or listen to commercial messages. Isn't new, it's more challenged now than ever again, back to the habituation where we're forming habits right now that are going to be tougher to break on streaming. And, you know, we've replaced live original programming, save the great work that the telephones have done. And the global citizen bringing the primary broadcast networks together was amazing.



Michael (28m 35s):

Having Kimmel and Colbert and Fallon on one, you know, other than on a 911 or a, a Sandy or things like that, you just don't see that sort of collaboration. And that's really great what all the networks have done. And all of the publishers we're dealing with here are doing to, to change their messaging and deal with the clients. We see it across the board. We see it in the digital platforms with snap and Facebook and Google being, you know, more willing to play by different rules and regulations.

Michael (29m 7s):

If you will. We're finding brands getting more comfortable. Thankfully with adjacency to news news is as our friends advice of said, news is the new sports. You know, we're seeing, we're seeing news take on, on the one hand, we're kind of ODing on it on the other hand,

Mike (29m 25s):

Talk about new habits so you can't break it.

Michael (29m 27s):

You know, on the other hand, we can't get enough of it. My wife, who's been making fun of me for three years, being hooked on the news, just post 2016 election. I now will walk by her movie and occasionally note she's watching news when she never did before. I don't mean she never did, but not, not on a regular.

Mike (29m 47s):

My wife is obsessed with Chris Cuomo. Now it's like, it's worrying me like a new habit that I'm concerned with. I mean, I will, I will give it to him. You mentioned you used the word existential, which is interesting. There's been a lot of talk that this was going to happen someday with, with the television advertising market and the upfronts and the way that businesses operated, it was



bound to be up and getting changed. And now what people do, there's a lot of talk that this could be the fuel that really blows up the way the TV is bought until I don't know.

Mike (30m 20s):

What are you hearing?

Michael (30m 21s):

Let me address that. And there's not too much I can say there, Mike, because we're active in the conversations amongst the various players right now, media link from that perspective. But, you know, let me, let me go back to what Bob Iger now, the a, what is the correct title? Executive chairman of the Walt Disney company said, maybe this is the time to upend the traditional upfront model and the pilot model, you know, is, you know, **Mike** cause you've, you've commented.

Michael (30m 52s):

And I know you've watched my younger, son's a producer. He was on location, producing an NBC pilot, a great show. I hope that gets picked up eventually called Ordinary Joe. But you know, he was like, everyone else, they shut down production. He was about to be producing a movie for Quibi in of all places, Bucharest. Wow. You know, that's been put on hold. I mean, it'll get made, but it's, pre-made now with no new content coming out. What's the purpose of an upfront number one, it's a real question.

Michael (31m 25s): Number two, but that's a short term.

Mike (31m 28s): Is that a 2020 condition or a future? That's just hard to know.



Michael (31m 32s):

I think we have to look at it back to what I said earlier, transitional normal. I think we're going to have something different for this year's upfront. Obviously we're not having Carnegie hall and Linco and radio city and Madison Square Garden. That's for sure. But the large advertisers are still looking at how they can affect the best transactional value by making upfront commitments. I think this year will be a one off, but I think long term, this will be the forcing function for us to reimagine the way we've done things, you know, is there sense to spending, you know, upwards of \$15 million or more sometimes to create a pilot that somebody gets to go like this and 15 million or 18 or \$10 million goes down the drain for a pilot, these streamers have been doing more direct to series orders, you know, then, then going through the pilot Mambo and you know, that's probably gonna be more likely going forward.

Michael (32m 37s):

And do I think we will go back in 2021 to a traditional broadcast year upfront done in may. You know, as I said, at Carnegie hall and Lincoln center and the like, I've been a believer, this is my opinion. I'm not speaking on behalf of anybody else other than media link, this conversation to be clear, I've listened to a lot of people have opinions, but I'm just giving you my opinion here. I think we will not have that the same way it's been traditionally going forward.

Michael (33m 9s):

We're going to have one set of facts for 20. And I think that will be flexible. Look, let me be clear. Disney, CBS, Comcast, NBCUniversal, Fox, Univision, Warner Media, and Turner. All of them are just being as flexible and as collaborative with their partners as can be. I'm watching it. We're seeing it. We're in some of the conversations, people all are in this together. That's why this is different than 2008 or 9/11.

Michael (33m 42s):

This is impacting everybody across industries. In a way that you know indiscriminate in its horror. So I think everybody is in a different position, but I think we'll end up in a better place in the dialogue that's going on now in the industry. It is very, very positive and collaborative. On the other hand, in the short term, you've got to look at what some of the marketers are doing. Just look at the work that AT&T has put up or, the pharma companies or people who are trying their



best to still have their message out, but be sensitive and have the right personality on the messaging.

Michael (34m 24s):

It's really to be applauded that they've acted quickly. They've acted with resolve, so many now are stepping up. So again, I think there's a real collaboration and I think that's going to lead to a better place.

Mike (34m 42s):

It's interesting on that note, you've been someone who's pretty vocal about the desire for real purpose-driven marketing. You're seeing some of that now, you've talked about how brands can really have a powerful impact on climate change, things like that. Do you think you're going to in your mind, have we seen enough before this crisis, will we see renewal? Or where do you see that going?

Michael (35m 3s):

So Mike, you might remember this year at CES. My keynote was an interview with two great CEOs, great leaders in our industries, respective industries, Alan Jope, the CEO of Unilever and the Mark Benioff of Salesforce to folks who walk the walk and talk the talk. They are both both companies, but both individuals are really, really believed, you know, in their, at their core about purpose.

Michael (35m 34s):

And it's not just because it's, you know, they really mean it. And, and so I think you're going to see more and more and more of that. And I think what you're going to see is purpose taking on a different meaning. It's not just purpose, like do good, obviously it is, but it's purpose and actually impacting the lives of people in this environment because nobody's coming out of this unscathed.



Michael (36m 4s):

You know, Mike, I'm older. And so I can speak to what you can speak to in the context of your grandparents and likely your great grandparents. I speak of in the context of my parents and my grandparents, which was that so-called depression mentality that that generation took with them. I think this will leave an imprint that may have as much lasting impact as that so-called depression mentality and not just from a financial, obviously the financial, you know, fall out of this is going to be massive and devastating to so many people, but the cultural mindset - we're not shaking hands so soon.

Michael (36m 45s):

We're not next to each other at a sporting event, so soon. But I don't know if we're ever shaking hands again. We might be doing the Hollywood air kiss a lot more, you know? Yeah. We've been able to do more of that than, than a European kissing on two cheeks.

Mike (37m 1s):

We might be wiping down our groceries for the rest of our lives. I don't know how it's going to be.

Michael (37m 5s):

You know, this is LA where we have the good fortune of valet parking, most places. I'm thinking of like in the new new, like I'm going to be carrying Clorox wipes in my car because anytime a person parks my car, I'm wiping down. You know, I have to say it, I'm doing a product placement here for WeatherTech, but that spot I've been seeing makes me all of a sudden - I bought a WeatherTech here, you know, so the call to action work, but I'm thinking of WeatherTech floor mats from my car.

Michael (37m 39s):

So I could easily wipe them and spray them when I get in to it. You know, these are all things that I think are going to have lasting societal impact, not bad, by the way, I have a couple of my friends who haven't been hand shakers for a long time. They were fist bumpers or whatever. You know,



people kind of, that was almost socially insulting. Like you're not going to shake my hand. What do you mean? Who are you like, what the hell? Well now, you know, nobody is.

Mike (38m 5s):

One last thing you kind of alluded to this, Michael, I wondered going into this year, there was a lot of talk about this is going to be the year that I'm almost like a privacy reckoning with all the new regulations and consumers being aware more than ever. Now, I wonder, has that in your mind, has that changed? Cast aside? Getting more intense?

Michael (38m 27s):

I think it will get more intense once we realize more of our life is going to be online. Like this idea of somebody breaching this conversation is not, you know, we're not talking about state secrets here, but if we were, you know, there's real concern about privacy in that way. And you is anybody able to listen to our conversations and what's trackable and what's not trackable and all of that.

Michael (39m 2s):

I mean, God knows what else we aren't doing to protect ourselves in this environment. So I'm not trying to be a fearmonger, but I don't know. I mean, I haven't started to even think about that in terms of privacy. I mean, we all have to.

Mike (39m 19s):

Yeah. And at the same time there's talk about whether we need a big data solving. This pandemic is a big data problem in a lot of ways. And that might require us to share more its a weird set of circumstances.



Michael (39m 31s):

It goes back to minority port and welcome mr. Yamamoto, you know, we're all in that moment. Now people are going to be taking your temperature as you're walking in the door and they're going to show me your phone and tell me you're healthy. I don't know.

Mike (39m 46s):

Yeah, as we keep saying, this is unprecedented.

Michael (39m 51s):

Well, I walk and see some people who aren't wearing masks, you're going to see, God willing it's not civil unrest, but, you know, think about just in the normal times when you challenge somebody publicly, like, you know, I'm going to make this up: When somebody cuts in line, you know, tempers flare, and you go, what are you, special?

Michael (40m 22s):

Well, think about it in the context of, you walk into a place and there's people not wearing masks or not properly physically distancing, again, hopefully it doesn't lead to civil unrest, but people should be called out on that. I mean, I'm a big fan of take pictures and send them in, you know, de Blasio style. I'm not looking for citizen policing, but on the other hand, I think you're going to see more of that. That's actually a bigger concern.

Mike (40m 51s):

Yeah. And people are on edge right now. Well, listen, this is a terrific conversation, Michael, I'm really appreciative of your time. Thanks so much.



Michael (41m 1s):

I'm happy to do this. And I want to thank our folks, our friends at Appsflyer and Devrie DeMarco on my team. And the folks that helped put this together, and Mr. Shields, it's always good to see you and share ideas.

Mike (41m 16s):

Same, Michael, thanks so much. Good to talk to you. Stay safe.